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**Crime and Unemployment in South Wales: The
Disclosure of an Inter and Post-War Debate**

Gary Rauter

BSc. (Econ.) Hons. (Wales)

**A thesis submitted to the University of Wales in
candidature for the degree of Master of Philosophy,
November, 2002**

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Abstract and Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the debate on the relationship between crime and unemployment. Throughout, the point of focus is specifically on how the link between crime and social deprivation was made in two, short and separate moments in time: broadly, 1929/31 and 1989/91. The research aims to uncover the nature of this debate from a comparative viewpoint within the general context of South Wales, traditionally an industrial region comprising a rich tapestry of communities from Monmouth in the east to Carmarthen in the west. Inevitably the debate moves beyond the borders of Wales, consequent of the fact that statistical and other sources frequently refer to the wider picture: references to 'England and Wales' as opposed to 'Wales' or 'South Wales' being commonplace. However, this is not an attempt at a definitive history. Rather, it is a *contribution* to a debate on issues already explored in various ways and through the medium of a number of different disciplines. **I have deliberately cited contemporary source material in the exact words of the commentator or observer in order to preserve and communicate the authentic tone and voice of the debate.**

The problem of crime remains one of the most potent concerns to permeate British social life. At times, it has been especially topical: the inter and post-war periods being a classic example of this in so far as it was debated within the context of mass unemployment and poverty. Often, too, the debate has assimilated the quest for understanding and reasoning. As Labour's Home Office Minister, Mike O'Brien, pointed out in September 2000:

I used to work as a lawyer and a lot of people I saw passing through the Courts came back after re-offending. Many of them were there because they had lost their jobs or their homes, some of them were drug addicts and others had suffered marriage break-up while in prison. We are tough on crime but we also want to be tough on the causes.¹

Others, such as Labour's sometime Home Secretary, Jack Straw, accept that the problem of crime is complex, misunderstood and far from being 'cracked' - even at times when official figures for unemployment and offences against property are relatively low. He commented that:

Crime is still far too high in this country. We are not complacent. We know more needs to be done.²

¹ **The Times**, 4 September, 2000

² **The Times**, 17 October, 2000

Rarely, it seems, are newspapers devoid of articles referring to the exploits of offenders or the repercussions for their victims. From 'revolving door syndrome' (repeat offending) through to 'zero tolerance', the cycle of offending and the reasons underpinning it remains a constant, albeit resilient source of complaint.

Given that we are examining two specific moments in time, it has to be said that in the inter-war period, society was much more clearly understood. There was a distinct sense of community. Society operated within clearly understood boundaries. It was also a hierarchical society where different social 'agencies' played distinct roles. These agencies, such as the police, unions, government, local authorities, prisons and clerics, had conspicuous responsibilities: it was a very distinctive, industrial society. However, this was a period that, apart from the presence of political struggle and protest, will always be remembered for mass unemployment - a phenomenon that was to threaten social normality. In essence, chapters two and three highlight the incidence of crime across a broad range of categories - from begging and shoplifting through to burglary and robbery. Elucidated, is the degree to which the sense of community was strained across a region that appeared to condone certain crimes and condemn others. In essence, it is the reaction of these agencies and various commentators that we explore here, with the main lines of argument illustrating how the link between social deprivation and crime was made; in other words, how crime and unemployment was actually debated. The findings disclose a worrying level of offences against property, a deep concern about delinquency by juveniles, the advent of crime prevention measures and a clear contempt for law and order. By no means were these safe, law-abiding times.

The South Wales of the late Eighties and early Nineties was very different compared to the inter-war years. To a degree it was a society less politicised, less community oriented and much more confused by the erosion of the Welfare State and the activities of a disenchanted youth. There is also little sense of hierarchy in a region characterised by disparate, albeit desperate, communities obsessed by mass consumerism. There are acute social problems - especially on the estates; contempt for the law is common; religion has little influence in people's lives; there is a discernible underclass and a high level of crime-fear. Moreover, politics appears not to provide a solution. This society is no longer industrialised but *de-industrialised*, particularly in the aftermath of mass pit closures following the Miners' Strike of the mid-Eighties.

In chapters four and five, crime and unemployment are examined against the backcloth outlined above. What transpires is a re-emergence of an intense debate on crime and unemployment. Whilst social normality is once again under threat as a result of a recession and mass unemployment, the debate has become something of a political sabre; each political party using ideology to either attack or support the Government of the day. However, as for the inter-war years, there are clear statistical correlations supporting a consensus view that unemployment initiates a particular pattern of offending. There are distinct similarities relating to the types of offences being committed. Also, 'new' crimes such as vandalism and drugs emerge. Nevertheless, and with that in mind, the debate in this period has become much more complex: the corollary of greater understanding of issues relating to the aetiology of offending behaviour. Furthermore, whilst agencies in the inter-war period had specific roles and a degree of power, these have now become diluted and relatively powerless. The police, for instance, are seen more as social workers forced to patrol the new 'mass landscapes', essentially, the 'no-go' areas of estates characterised by acute long-term unemployment and lawlessness.

Arising naturally from the research, issues relating to fear, punishment and policing emerge. Generally, these themes address the nature of crime and the complexions of criminals in a region that is in many ways unique, especially in terms of unemployment, population, geography, industrialisation and, of course, criminality. However, this research is primarily concerned with the responses of local people who lived through two unique periods of economic recession. Consequently, the question addressed throughout this work is one that asks whether unemployment and social deprivation had any bearing on ordinary people turning to crime. In order to do this, the methodology applied is both qualitative and quantitative, consisting of planned and scheduled interviews as well as surveys of newspapers and statistical records. Throughout, original newspapers, documents, articles and secondary sources are exhaustively researched, as indeed are the records/archives at police headquarters, county record offices and reference libraries. Essentially, then, the methodology applied here is largely familiar to social historians generally.

This thesis is an attempt to broaden our historical understanding of the way in which crime and unemployment has been debated. As the introduction attests, very little is known about the nature of this specific debate in the inter-war years in South Wales. There are, of course, references and allusions to the sentiment that 'idleness breeds mischief', as

Isaac Watts once reflected. The same can also be said to a certain extent in the late 1980's and early 1990's. However, such a remit is arguably too narrow and, therefore, a number of other questions are raised and addressed in this thesis. These include:

- Was there a link between social deprivation and criminality?
- Was social normality threatened and to what extent?
- Were communities put under strain and, if so, how did this manifest itself and to what extent? How did various agencies react to this?
- In what way did crime manifest itself and what were the main offences committed?
- To what extent was law and order threatened?
- How was crime and unemployment debated politically, theologically and by all the other agencies?
- How did the Courts react to criminals and how severe was punishment? Did the Courts react more or less leniently towards criminals? What effect did these offences have on sentencing?
- What crimes were being committed by females and were there gender disparities?
- What items were being stolen and what was their value?
- Were certain offences condemned more than others?
- Was there a discernible contempt for the law?
- Did a fear of crime develop and what was the impact on communities?
- Were there methods of crime prevention in both periods? If so, did they work and have they changed over time?
- What was the impact of unemployment on juveniles and how did they react?
- What was the pattern of serious / violent crime?
- Did either period witness the advent of 'new' crimes?
- Did low paid workers turn to crime?
- Was there a changing pattern of crime and, if so, how did agencies react to this?
- How, and in what way, has the debate altered/changed over time?

With the above in mind, it is to the introduction that we now turn. Importantly, this initial chapter attempts to set the debate in its context, to clarify any potential ambiguities and

to equip the reader with the necessary terminology used in subsequent chapters.

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Chapter One

Introduction - The Debate in its Context

In a social historical sense, a plethora of reasons exist to justify the study of crime and delinquency. First and foremost, there is an acknowledgement particularly amongst social historians that 'crime opens many windows on the past'. [1] In 1993, this was very much the view of the late Professor David Jones who, in a seminar on the social causes underpinning criminal behaviour, suggested that social deprivation in the form of unemployment and poverty tended to correlate statistically at certain times in history with the pattern of crime. Jones, who maintained that very little was known about the way in which crime and unemployment was debated in South Wales, was also particularly mindful of the dangers of relying too heavily on the figures *per se*. He constantly drew attention to the need for an investigation incorporating both literary and statistical sources covering two periods of industrial depression/recession. Commenting on periods of particularly high unemployment in the inter-war years, Jones later reinforced this view by insisting that:

Everyone knew that, in these periods, court cases were only the tip of the iceberg. In 1921, for example, there were reports from the Rhondda of 'hundreds of men and boys' illegally working outcropping coal seams, killing the mountain sheep, and taking timber from collieries and advertising hoardings. Even when living standards improved substantially, a sudden economic downturn was always likely to produce a rash of thefts and break-ins. [2]

In the historical tradition, therefore, this study draws on many different sources and disciplines in order 'to uncover the truth of the past'. [3] For this reason, the social

historical position must be set into a context which identifies the discipline as exclusive, or separate, from others such as sociology and criminology. With that in mind, there are three main points which need to be considered when trying to place the crime - unemployment debate into a social historical context. The first is that the subject matter is not unique to any one discipline. Criminologists, sociologists, psychologists and geographers, for instance, have all provided a valuable insight into the nature of this debate.[4] While each contribution has been somewhat unique in terms of emphasis, the debate as a whole has ultimately benefited from a process of evolution and layering: each argument leading to an enhancement of knowledge and a better understanding of the issues concerned. Secondly, it must be said that the crime - unemployment debate is not a new phenomenon. Some of the first proper investigations owe a great deal to the work undertaken, for instance, by criminologists and sociologists such as W.A. Bonger (1916), C. Burt (1925), S.K. Ruck (1933) and H. Mannheim (1940). In America, and as a response to the depression there, investigations by H. Blumer (1935), H. McKay (1931-2) and Vernon Jones (1932) are also noteworthy. Most significantly, though, is that each of these writers shared a consensus view: they each stressed the importance of environmental factors with regard to the causes of crime.[5] Thirdly, within the study of history, crime as a subject in its own right is a fairly young affair - especially when compared to the disciplines referred to above. As one commentator noted: 'The application of historical research to the study of crime and justice accelerated only recently.'[6]

Since about the late 1960's, an enormous amount of interest has developed in the study of crime, with some of the published works being particularly noteworthy. For example, Douglas Hay's (et al.) **Albion's Fatal Tree** (1975); E.P. Thompson's

Whigs and Hunters(1975);David Philips' **Crime and Authority in Victorian England**(1977) and David Jones' **Crime, Protest, Community and Police in 19th Century Britain**(1982). Many of these writers regarded their contributions as something of an unknown quantity given that the historical material that existed at the time of their writing was considered to be unreliable. Therefore, crime as a 'new' topic within history was treated with caution. As the historian, J.J.Tobias, claimed: 'We are dealing with intangible, unmeasurable evidence which is very difficult to assess.'[7] For this reason, E.P. Thompson explained his research as 'an experiment in historiography', adding: 'I was like a parachutist coming down in unknown territory.'[8] The American historian, Martin Wiener, commented that:

...the last two decades have witnessed a virtual explosion of historical scholarship on crime and criminal justice, in which assumptions of a steady march of progress have been sceptically scrutinised.[9]

On the other hand, David Jones pointed out that whilst crime in social history was suddenly a 'boom industry' it represented 'a fairly logical extension of trends in modern social history'.[10] However, Jones consistently maintained the tenuous nature of the subject. In his last work entitled **Crime and Policing in the Twentieth Century**, he acknowledged that the historical study of crime was fraught with problems: factors ranging from 'Government economies', 'inaccessible' records and 'rules of confidentiality' tending to combine and militate against the historian of crime - especially in the twentieth century.[11]

The fact that the study of crime within social history is still in its youthful stages, may well explain why so little research has been undertaken on certain issues. In 1984, for instance, the historian J.A. Sharpe commented that while the

study of crime within history was a growth area it 'still has considerable growing to do'. [12] For this reason, the lack of historical research, particularly in Wales, on issues such as 19th-century transportation, women and crime, suicide, and the crime-unemployment debate, can be accounted for. Furthermore, when research has been attempted it has often been criticised, particularly by other disciplines more familiar with the subject. For example, it is sometimes argued by sociologists that the historical approach to crime does not adequately address 'theories of society' or the 'contemporary situation'. [13] In other words, the criticism is that historical approaches to crime are out of context. Another criticism asserts that historical narrative is often too simplistic and for this reason, sociologists, for instance, have tended to dismiss records of the past. [14] Nevertheless, it seems that in recent years this 'traditional' criticism has been changing. Both sociologists and criminologists have begun to acknowledge that historical analysis provides a better understanding of the present day crime problem. The sociologist J. Inciardi, for example, suggested that:

A growing number of criminologists have come to realise the need for analysing the past for a better understanding of the present, and for correcting many of the misconceptions about crime that have been entrenched in our consciousness for many decades. [15]

Furthermore, he maintained that whilst sociologists have concentrated on 'social behaviour' and historians on 'aspects of particular personages and events', there is a great deal to learn from placing crime in its historical context. This is because historians of crime are able to observe social behaviour 'within the frame of time'. As he put it:

The longitudinal view offered by the observation and documentation of phenomena through time can provide for a

more complete analysis and understanding of the emergence, scope, and persistence or change of given social organisation and behaviour, and as such, history becomes the very framework of detached inquiry.[16]

The response from social historians of crime seems to echo the view that undermining the historical position leads inexorably to a narrower conclusion. David Jones argued that criticism of the historian of crime as outlined above tends to 'pay insufficient regard to the discipline and instincts of the historian'.[17] He continued:

As for criminologists and sociologists, although their propositions and theories are often very helpful to the historian, one can argue that their work has been sometimes too mechanical and one-dimensional. Perhaps it is sufficient that there have been recent requests within the sociology discipline for historical perspectives on gang activities, pilfering, 'criminal areas', and the rest. Similarly, it must be obvious by now that single and global theories of crime - psychological, ecological, economic, etc. - need to be tested very thoroughly over time.[18]

In defending the position of the historian, then, Jones not only highlighted the relevance and unique importance of historical understanding on issues relating to crime, but also the context within which they should be examined. The historical approach to crime is different to the approach of other disciplines because it is able to observe different aspects of the problem over time, generalise certain facts and contribute to that body of knowledge that seeks to understand the process of social change.[19]

It is by no means unintentional that two historical moments are singled out for a comparative analysis. In an economic, social and political sense, both these periods are, of course, unique. With that in mind, and in the early Nineties, when unemployment soared to record proportions and

social investigators reminded us of the presence of poverty, the socially excluded, the homeless or the economically inactive, similarities became increasingly evident. For many, the 'underclass' of the Nineties were not that dissimilar to the 'unemployables' of the Thirties. Clearly, there emerged a certain familiarity which invited a longer view or a revision of past experience. Not surprisingly, modern dialogue relating specifically to the debate on crime and unemployment also tended to include comparisons with the inter-war period, a period often considered to be one of severe unemployment, economic depression and social distress: the 'wasted years', as the historian John Stevenson put it.[20]

Commentators have often asserted that crime in the earlier period was not considered to be a problem, unlike today. An example of this, for instance, can be found in the unpublished reflections of childhood by local historian, John Ace, who recalled law-abiding and peaceful times at Garden Village, Gorseinon. As he put it:

Garden Village...was full of wonderful, friendly people, poor, in financial terms, but rich in companionship and understanding for the feelings of others. We had rows and arguments, yes, but no crime, hooliganism, or vandalism. Sometimes a fight, but that would soon be settled.[21]

However, contradicting himself somewhat, Ace does hint that perhaps things were not quite as law-abiding as might seem. He recalled, for instance, how misdemeanours 'were as prevalent then as they are now' and how 'we were no angels' and how if people were found 'doing wrong', 'punishment was swift and effective'.[22] A further example can be found in the recollections of local Swansea historian 'Griffy' Edwards, who responded to a question on the incidence of crime in his local community of Gowerton during the Great Depression with another question: 'Crime? What crime'? Upon further reflection,

however, he added:

Wait a minute, there was the 'Elba Chocolate Box' case. Caused a right fuss that did..it was mainly those who didn't have anything - job or anything, might even have been jealousy for those who had a job, I don't know, but they'd come on to the site (Elba Steelworks) and pinch like mad[and] I, yes, do you know when I think back it wasn't quite so rosy. But there you are now, the time wasn't easy and people do forget the way it really was...it was poverty-driven crime making people do what they wouldn't normally do.[23]

One of the main patterns running through this work, then, is an examination of comments such as this in order to address the underlying question, as one writer put it, of whether we are dealing with 'a new problem or an old way of life'.[24]

The discussion up to this point has dealt mainly with the justification of social historical analysis in relation to the crime and unemployment debate. In dealing with the 'context' issue, the question of why such a study should be conducted has partly been answered; namely, that a comparative analysis leads to a wider understanding. However, there is a second, more obvious reason which relates to the fact that research into this debate from a social historical position is deficient.

Following a substantial review of contemporary material written by crime historians such as, for example, J.J.Tobias, J.M.Beattie, D.Philips, G.Rude and others, it appears that this debate has been largely ignored. With specific regard to South Wales this does seem to be the case and is borne out following detailed scrutiny of related research topics under the headings 'crime' and 'unemployment'.[25] On the one hand, this deficiency may be explained by the fact that some historians of crime consider crime-unemployment relationships to be more in the domain of criminology because of the causal

connection.[26] On the other hand, it appears that historians have tended to concentrate on other issues such as protest, the police, the courts, punishment and the prison system. It also seems that in their research, historians have been almost overwhelmingly biased towards the 19th century - particularly the emergence of the prison system, the police and the development of punishment.[27] Whatever the reasons, however, it would be unfair to assert that historians have completely ignored this debate. Allusions to some degree have been made, but once again the emphasis has been towards the 19th century and often without any detailed analysis or elaboration beyond the causal or statistical. J.J.Tobias, for instance, has commented that the transition from war to peace conditions in 1815 led to:

a period of widespread distress and unemployment. There is evidence that these events were accompanied by an upsurge in crime.[28]

Essentially, Tobias argued that during periods of no or little work in the 19th-century, people sometimes turned to crime out of necessity because 'Crime was a bread and butter matter'.[29] Similarly, David Philips in his study of the Black Country 1835 - 1860, found that in comparison with offences such as drunkenness and assault, property crime tended to increase during times of depression and decrease during periods of prosperity.[30] Nevertheless, in spite of these differing views, a perusal of historical evidence from a number of sources leads to one over-riding impression: whilst historians have made some comment on the debate, they have largely skimmed over it in favour of other, equally topical issues.

Definitions and Problems

So far, the terms *crime* and *unemployment* have been used fairly ambiguously and some explanation is required. However, the search for an acceptable definition for both terms leads the enquirer into a difficult and complex area. By looking firstly at the term unemployment, it soon becomes evident that unless a number of factors are borne in mind, then a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the term is all too easily confused.

In simple terms, unemployment can be explained as 'a condition of involuntary idleness';[31] or, 'a state of worklessness experienced by people who see themselves or are seen by others as potential members of the workforce';[32] or, 'the stock of all those individuals who are not in employment and who are either in the process of moving to a new job or who are unable to find work at the prevailing real wage rate'.[33] What is significant about these definitions in general is that they refer to the unemployed as those people who are able to work, but for some reason or other are unable to engage in it. Included in these explanations are those who have never worked, for example, school leavers and those who may have terminated their employment on a voluntary basis but now desire to return to the workforce.[34] Not included are certain individuals who do not, or who are unable to, seek paid employment in the labour market; for example, the disabled or the modern day housewife/husband. Other examples would include vagrants or the idle rich. The term unemployment, then, is arguably best recognised in relation to this work by distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary idleness, as first conceived by the economist John Maynard Keynes in the inter - war period. It is, therefore, discernible as a term which refers to an inability to obtain paid work. Consequently the fact that it is involuntary, or

in some way forced on individuals, has led some social investigators - particularly those of the political Left - to assert that it is an unacceptable social evil that threatens the basis of social normality.[35]

While the term unemployment can be understood in a simplistic way, it is nevertheless a term that can become easily confused because of the different categories within which unemployment can be distinguished. This is because unemployment can be differentiated according to specific circumstances. For example, according to demand changes during different seasons (seasonal); as a consequence of a downturn in demand (cyclical); as a consequence of a change in the structure of demand synonymous with a change in consumer preference, ie. demand in favour of gas instead of coal (structural - mass); as a result of workers changing between jobs (transitional / frictional); as a consequence of changes in methods of production (technological); and finally, unemployment of a hidden / disguised nature, ie. hidden from government statistics perhaps because employers are continuing to pay workers on a temporary basis because of short time conditions, or, workers making their work last longer than necessary out of fear of unemployment (disguised).[36] It is suggested, that whilst the term unemployment seems quite straightforward, any discussion of it must take into account these categories. Also to be accounted for are regional and long-term considerations.

An attempt at a definition of crime is equally difficult. Whilst there have been many efforts to understand the term, the consensus of opinion appears to support the basic premise that a crime is an anti - social act: a failure to adhere to a given standard of conduct. The cornerstone of many definitions, which emphasise a relationship with society and its attitude, stresses that crime has a legal basis. Consequently, that which is considered as a criminal act or

deed depends largely on the attitude of society. Whilst crime may not be defined in a similar fashion everywhere, crimes such as offences against the person, property crime and sexual offences are broadly judged in the same manner by all civilised codes of law: they are denounced and condemned. This denunciation of crime is strongly underpinned by a sense of anxiety toward the criminal who, like his or her fellow members of the community, feels and experiences the pleasures and pains of everyday life. However, this anxiety becomes manifest in different ways, but particularly in the view that the criminal is somehow different, or aloof, from the 'normal' and law abiding members of the community. For some, the criminal is seen as less fortunate or less circumspect. For others, less restrained and, more often than not, a menace to be controlled. Suffice it to say, it is no accident that the extent of anxiety closely reflects the degree of punishment; and moreover, detracts nothing from the fact that the criminal is often a focus for the political animal.

In a modern, civilised society, the definition of crime is deeply entrenched in legal tradition and the notion of law. The violation of law can lead to a form of punishment to be inflicted on the criminal on behalf of society. The State, being the main agent, intends to uphold and maintain a standard of conduct pertinent to a particular time and the law functions in such a way so as to ensure that the common rules, aims and values of society are not breached. To breach the boundaries of acceptable conduct leads to a form of retribution. A crime, then, can be defined as follows:

A crime is an act that is capable of being followed by criminal proceedings, having one of the types of outcome (punishment) known to follow these proceedings.[37]

Another definition suggests:

A crime as opposed to a civil wrong, is an act which is forbidden, or the omission to perform an act which is commanded by the law, by statute or by regulations made by a subordinate authority; the remedy for which is the punishment of the offender at the instance of the state.[38]

In very simple terms, and for the purpose of this thesis, a definition would refer to a crime as being any violation of the law leading to punishment of the perpetrator on behalf of society: it is something which is defined within the parameters of the law, giving rise to some form of punishment if the perpetrator is detected.[39]

A definition of crime is complicated by legal procedure and different categories of offence group. Essentially, this thesis examines both indictable and non-indictable offences recorded by the police, although non-recordable cautions are also looked at. As a guide, a reference to indictable crime indicates a greater level of seriousness(ie. Burglary), being generally characterised by cases heard at Crown Court where a judge and jury preside. Non-indictable offences (ie.simple larceny,drunkenness,suicide) refer to those cases usually heard at Magistrates' Courts without a jury; they are usually less serious in nature. With regard to offence groups, the main ones examined here are predominantly 'offences against property with violence'(ie.housebreaking / shopbreaking); 'offences against property without violence' (ie. shoplifting, receiving, simple larceny) and certain 'offences against the person'. On the whole, the offences are mainly of an 'economic' nature in that they reflect some form of pecuniary gain or want. For example, burglary; robbery; theft and handling stolen goods; fraud and forgery; and certain drug offences.[40] The crime historian, George Rude, distinguished these different categories by simplifying them according to

three main criteria: acquisitive crime; social or survival crime; protest crime. He argued that by disregarding the more traditional method for differentiating between crimes, ie, 'crimes against the person' or 'crimes against property', the work of the social historian of crime is made a little easier.[41] However, of the three identified crime categories, social/survival crime is probably the most pertinent to the debate on crime and unemployment; and this, argues Rude, is because it considers 'poverty as an inducement to crime'.[42] Other writers have made similar assertions by pointing to the association between unemployment, low wages and poverty.[43] To illustrate the point further, however, Rude provided the example of an unemployed bookbinder who stole a coal tub worth 3s. When asked by the court for a reason for his offence he claimed that he did it for 'want of employment' which had reduced him to 'the most abject state of poverty'.[44] Whether crime is differentiated according to the more traditional methods or according to the criteria employed by Rude, the significant point to note is that we are concerned with those categories of crime which reflect an individual's often desperate personal circumstances.

Aside from problems of definition, a number of other problems become apparent. For example, throughout this work references are made to the numbers of unemployed. Whilst the figures discussed in the narrative give the impression of dependability, it would be misleading to assume their complete accuracy. The main problem with unemployment figures in both periods is that the figures are never indicative of the real level of unemployment; and this, it seems, gives rise to a different debate. As D.N.Ashton put it:

Given the controversies which surround the public discussion of the causes of unemployment it is not surprising that there is also debate over what the unemployment statistics measure.[45]

Commenting on the inter-war figures, the writer W.R.Garside pointed out:

There were important deficiencies in the scope and coverage of the statistics even at national level. It is important therefore not to infer from them more than a close scrutiny of their internal methods of computation would justify.[46]

In complete agreement was George Orwell, a prodigious and consistent critic of the official figures, who asserted:

When you see the unemployment figures quoted at two millions, it is fatally easy to take this as meaning that two million people are out of work...this is an enormous under-estimate, because, in the first place, the only people shown on unemployment figures are those actually drawing the dole.[47]

The over-riding criticism of inter-war unemployment statistics was that they were under-counted. According to Garside, under-counting the figures was also a widespread problem. Essentially, he found that whilst many unemployed workers 'lodged' their unemployment books at Employment Exchanges, many others did not: they completely ignored the Exchanges because of 'a general feeling of hopelessness in obtaining work'. Also, he found that workers who were not insured were automatically dis-counted.[48] Similarly, the historian John Stevenson has argued that under-counting was indeed an indeterminate problem and mainly because of the influence of those who were outside the system of insurance. He claimed that on account of official figures being based on percentages of insured workers, large groups of workers were completely excluded: the self-employed, married women and agricultural labourers, for instance.[49] Furthermore, Garside has pointed out that there were two significant failings with the figures.

Firstly, he found that the incentive for unemployed workers to register as unemployed was inextricably linked to changes in administrative and legislative practice - especially in the period 1928 - 1934. This meant, for example, that the decrease in unemployment registrations following legislative changes in 1928, 1930 and 1934 led to unemployment figures being widely under-counted.[50] Secondly, and perhaps the more conspicuous failing, was the complete disregard of juvenile unemployment; particularly in the 16 to 18-year-old age group. As he maintained:

There was no readily available index of the rate of juvenile unemployment...or published statistics of the duration or regional and industrial distribution of unemployment among the under eighteens as a whole during the inter-war period.[51]

Similar criticisms have been applied to the modern interpretation of the figures. In his work **Unemployment Under Capitalism**, for instance, Ashton has argued that monthly assessments of unemployment figures can be completely unreliable because they are based on monthly assessments of the *registered* unemployed only. Thus, married spouses and/or those who believe that they are not entitled to benefits tend to be excluded. Moreover, he points out that the figures have an immense 'political significance' and are always prone to 'administrative and political manipulation'.[52] According to the Trades Union Council (TUC), political manipulation of the figures often has the effect of excluding an immense number of the unemployed and, it seems, it can take many different forms. Hence, in 1983, the TUC argued that the network of Government employment schemes, administrative and legal changes underestimated the true figure by just under one million - half of whom were directly excluded by involvement with Government schemes such as YTS and Community

Programmes.[53] Furthermore, one particularly important administrative change impacted directly on the unemployment figures of South Wales. As Paul Lawless (*et al.*) pointed out:

One of the administrative changes is particularly pertinent to the coalfields: in 1989 ex-miners who were covered by the Redundant Mineworkers Pension Scheme were relieved of the requirement to register for benefits. At a stroke, this reduced registered unemployment by 15,000 according to the Department of Employment or 26,000 according to the independent Unemployment Unit.[54]

Statistically, such measures would distort any correlations between crime and unemployment; borne out by the dip in the unemployment figures for 1989 in chapters four and five.

Some have suggested that the real issue is one of interpretation. Ashton, for instance, has maintained that when it comes to unemployment figures, interpretation cannot be ignored - especially when attempting to correlate different periods. It is, he insisted, a failing that readily associates with figures generally. When comparing the 1930's with the 1990's, he argues, it could easily be shown that the unemployment level was either far less severe in the modern period or, as close as 1.4 per cent at the height of the Great Depression.[55]

The interpretation of crime data is also problematic and clearly a source of contention amongst crime historians. With some trepidation, writers such as Michael Maguire have asserted that the figures of crime do not blend easily with the social context: historians merely tolerate their inclusion in their work. He suggested that 'Official statistics...do not give a clear picture of the social or situational context of crimes'. Basically, Maguire argued that because the figures do not take into account the event itself, ie. whether petty or violent robbery, the figures are thus outside of the

social context. The inference, then, is that if historians are true to their craft - a craft that is inherently concerned with events - then the figures are best treated with caution.[56] For this reason, too, the crime historian Tobias devoted an entire chapter to his argument that the statistics of crime are so problematical as to be useless; they can be interpreted to mean almost anything. As he put it:

The Chaplain of Wandsworth Prison argued that crime had increased, the Chairman of the prison commissioners argued that it had decreased, and the Chief Constable of Staffordshire argued that it had remained substantially unchanged in amount. The statistics provided ammunition impartially for all three, and the welter of figures leaves us none the wiser.[57]

Criminal statistics have been a constant source of criticism since their inception in the early nineteenth century. On the one hand, disapproval has accentuated the fact that the figures are particularly sensitive to changes in the law. Thus, it follows that when the law is changed, new crimes are often introduced and subsequently listed in the annual returns. For example, in the period 1854 - 1960, suicide was considered a crime and was recorded as such along with the annual returns. After 1960 and before 1854, the figures would have reflected a more downward trend.[58] On the other hand, factors such as ineffective policing can have a similar effect. For example, if society feels that policing is largely ineffective, a downward trend in the figures would be expected as a consequence of victims not bothering to report incidents.[59] Likewise, the failure to report crime (an offence in itself) can be underpinned by a number of other reasons, all of which emphasise a downward trend to the true pattern of crime: fear of reprisals, fear of the Courts or even fear of increased insurance premiums following a break-in or burglary, for instance.[60]

The most worrying deficiency of the figures concerns the recording practices of the police. These can vary from failing to record incidents, through to improved recording methods: each either inflating or deflating the true pattern of crime.[61] Often, the term used to distinguish between the true level of crime and the recorded level is the 'Dark Figure'; or, as J.E. Conklin put it: 'the proportion that occurs but is not officially recorded'.[62] Moreover, the sociologist Stephen Moore has argued that the police influence on crime statistics can largely be accounted for by the method of categorisation. As he declared:

It is up to the police officers themselves to decide the most appropriate category. On that decision rests the fate of the individual (as one category of crime may be far more serious than another) and the construction of the official statistics.[63]

To a degree, Moore's words were underpinned following an interview with Sergeant Alun Samuel of South Wales Constabulary. Essentially, Samuel pointed out that the categorisation of crime was something of a minefield, involving practises that would worry many ordinary members of the public concerned about the true level of crime in their communities. Moreover, he stressed that there were particular problems with categorising offences such as Criminal Damage and Arson; and also between Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) and Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH). Often, he claimed, the difference between offences was subtle, but the emphasis was always to downplay the more serious by re-categorising. Wherever possible, he added, figures should reflect favourably on a particular Force. Therefore, to differentiate between ABH and GBH was very common: they were, as he claimed, 'examples of what can be done to alter the figures and hence make detection rates for violent offences appear better'. However, a far more worrying aspect of police recording practice was the fact

that the police either don't bother to record some offences, or they deliberately underplay those that may fuel social anxiety. For instance, Samuel claimed that on many occasions an attempted burglary was recorded as criminal damage: thus the offence was instantly trivialised. As he concluded:

I would say that the police wherever they are in the country would try and play down the crime in their area as it reflects badly on them if there are constant burglaries...police funding also plays a part in this, I think.[64]

To a certain extent, then, it is easy to understand why historians are often critical of utilising statistics in their work. Whilst some have pointed out that crime correlates over time with almost anything - including the sale of ice-cream[65] - others have suggested that future research must combine both literary and statistical evidence in the pursuit of accuracy.[66]

The Criminal: Born or Made?

Historically, the criminal has been perceived as either a product of nature (in-born theory) or a victim of nurture (social environment), and some explanation is needed given that the attempt here is to explore the social basis of criminality. According to the criminologist, Jock Young, the twentieth century has been characterised by two distinct 'images' of the criminal. As he put it:

Two images of the criminal recur throughout the past hundred years; the moral actor, freely choosing crime; and the automaton, the person who has lost control and is beset by forces within or external to him or her.[67]

On the one hand, the criminal has been viewed as sinful and wicked; on the other, an unfortunate being whose social circumstances have shaped a pattern of behaviour manifest as deviancy. In between, commentators have suggested a number of other factors play a part; factors which have little to do with specifics and more to do with 'vanity' and choice. For instance, writing in the **Listener** in 1931, Edgar Wallace asserted that most people turn criminal for reasons of choice. The criminal, he said, simply prefers the freedom that a life of crime can give over working for an employer. Crime, then, is merely another form of self-employment. As he maintained:

Most men are criminals because they prefer the freedom of a criminal career to working for an employer. The criminal is a masterman. He gets up at any hour he wishes. The factory hooter can go without causing him any great perturbation. He is subject to no discipline; he has in his work the elements of adventure and a certain amount of danger, and if the rewards are uncertain, they are also from his point of view, illimitable.[68]

Another commentator, A.R.L.Gardner, reached a similar conclusion. Writing in **Nineteenth Century and After** in 1929, Gardner declared that the recent spiral of property offences signified that crime - especially against property - was a lucrative 'adventure'. Crime, he said, had little to do with employment or characteral weakness, it was simply an attractive form of self-employment in which some individuals chose to indulge; to the point of turning it into an art form even. Following his study of a London 'cat-burglar', Gardner concluded that the typical criminal differed little from any other individual, often espousing:

a noble admiration for the life of a man of leisure, a dash of vanity, and a reasonable amount of ordinary human selfishness.[69]

It has to be said that arguments relating to crime theory were initially indecisive and vague. In the 18th century, for instance, Henry Dagge and Mannasseh Dawes argued that in the light of 'real social and psychological circumstances which limited choice and shaped human conduct', the motives of criminals were somehow associated with the workings of the sub-conscious mind and the social environment.[70] By the 19th century, however, when the social investigator Henry Mayhew turned crime theory into an empirical study in his work **London Labour and the London Poor**, explanations progressed into the territory of science and scientific investigation; crime theory being absorbed into the scientific revolution of the latter part of the 19th century.[71] According to the social investigator, Arthur Fink, this was a unique period of scientific progress within the social sciences, 'a time when the doctrines of biological and social evolution pervaded the scientific as well as the lay world'.[72] Nevertheless, crime increasingly became known as the 'strange new science' - a subject, like many others, capable of being investigated and scrutinised from a scientific perspective. Increasingly, crime was linked with physiognomy and the judgement of human character based on physical characteristics such as the shape of the human skull.[73] In turn, this heralded a change of attitude and emphasis in relation to criminals and criminal behaviour. More specifically, criminals were now considered to be *born* and crime was a matter of *heredity*. Nevertheless, to observers of the day the most famous 'crime scientist' was undoubtedly the Italian, Cesare Lombroso. Described as having become 'something of a household name', Lombroso completely dismissed any social theories of criminality. As David Garland put it:

His conception of the criminal as a naturally occurring

entity - a fact of nature rather than a social or legal product - led Lombroso to identify the causes which make one person a criminal and another a normal citizen.[74]

Essentially, Lombroso's ascendancy in public life followed in the wake of his study of army recruits and prison in-mates. In 1876, he announced to the world that he had 'discovered the criminal type'. He exclaimed:

This was not merely an idea but a revelation. At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problems of the nature of the criminal - an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped or sessile ears found in criminals, savages, and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh and drink its blood.
[75]

After 1880, and certainly up until the 1920's, the theory of the born criminal was very much the standard of the time. Periodically, commentators, such as Francis Galton in 1907, confidently asserted that the 'criminal type' was easily discernible. As he put it:

His conscience is almost deficient, his instincts are vicious, his power of self-control is very weak and he usually detests continuous labour..It is however, easy to show that the criminal nature tends to be inherited.[76]

Others, however, were not so convinced. On the eve of the First World War, questions relating to crime and heredity were beginning to be undermined. Dr Charles Goring, for instance,

replicated Lombroso's experiments in 1913 using English prison convicts. Following extensive investigation he announced that in-born theories were nothing more than a myth and denounced Lombroso as a sensationalist fraud. A few years later in 1923, the crime writer, Sir Cyril Burt, provided the first proper investigation into crime and environment, and proved convincingly that crime could run in families because of the adverse effect of factors such as unemployment and poverty. Biology, he said, played no part in turning people into criminals: crime was undoubtedly a 'social problem'.[77] A few years later, in 1931, a study by Charles Bishop confirmed the existence of a social theory underpinning criminality when he declared:

So deplorable is the state of affairs in most slum districts that many men, and probably more women, turn criminal for no better reason than they can no longer endure the conditions in which the chance of birth has cast their lot...People who live in a hell on earth cannot be expected to endure indefinitely without protest.[78]

By 1938, biological theories in the aetiology of crime had been thoroughly discredited; consequent of, as some have argued, the experience of mass unemployment in the inter-war years. As the criminologist Henry Goddard insisted: 'There is every reason to conclude that criminals are made and not born.'[79] Meanwhile in America, studies of identical twins and individual families by investigators such as Johannes Lange confirmed the view that environmental factors such as poverty and unemployment could not be ignored in the aetiology of crime and deviancy.[80] However, interestingly the debate found some expression in the newspapers. For instance, in the Swansea newspaper the **Cambrian Daily Leader** in 1924, Justice (Sir) Basil Thompson was reported to have commented that the link between crime, heredity and physical characteristics was

a nonsense. As he humorously put it:

There is no truth in it. I tried the Counsel on both sides. One of them, I am sorry to say, will have to be hanged for his face.[81]

Similarly, for those that endured unemployment, such as one Swansea man, the link was all too clear. As he asserted in the **South Wales Daily Post** in 1929: 'Idleness breeds laziness and mischief and ill-will.'[82]

In the post-Second World War era, retrospective examinations have disclosed that during periods of recession, unemployment and poverty appeared to contribute to a rise in criminality. In spite of counter-arguments suggesting that crime has also increased during periods of prosperity - examined in a later chapter - some commentators have highlighted the downward spiral engendered by social adversity; a spiral that was as inevitable as it was sensible. As Bernard Harris put it:

Under such circumstances, unemployed workers relied very heavily on their savings, on the money which they could borrow from their relatives and friends, on casual work, and, on occasion from petty crime.[83]

However, regardless of the erosion of biological theories, the post-War period has illustrated how differing conceptions of the criminal are exploited for political gain. As one crime writer put it:

Conservative and Anarchist share the view of the moral criminal, but for one he is fallen humanity and for the other the hero...for one the causes are biological, for the other, defects in society.[84]

According to Peter Riddell, the 1980's classically illustrated

the dichotomy between Right-wing and Left-wing responses to crime. In the wake of the Brixton Riots and the Scarman Report, he argued, Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was clear that 'the criminal was to blame for each crime committed' and nothing or no-one else besides. Furthermore, if anyone else was to blame it was, in her own words:

...the professional progressives among broadcasters, social workers and politicians who have created a fog of excuses in which the muggers and burglars operate.[85]

For Thatcher, crime was a problem stemming from 'human wickedness and indiscipline';[86] a view echoed by Conservative Party Chairman, Norman Tebbit.[87] However, this message in the Eighties became increasingly uncomfortable to live with, argued Riddell:

The general message was uncomfortable for many Conservatives because of the implied relationship between rising unemployment and crime. Mrs Thatcher repeatedly and specifically rejected this link, arguing that crime had risen rapidly in periods of prosperity and when unemployment was low. For her, as for many Conservatives, crime was crime irrespective of the research establishing the clear links between social and economic deprivation and lawlessness.[88]

Against the backcloth of the Scarman Report which stressed that crime should be understood in a social context and against a background of economic and social adversity, the political Left maintained the importance of employment as a means of tempering the wayward. Speaking on BBC Question Time, the Labour backbencher, Tony Benn, MP, insisted that:

You can't just dismiss unemployment as one of the causes of this...we have got to concentrate on getting unemployment down. When young people get jobs, many of the temptations disappear.[89]

In correspondence, Benn further added that: 'Where there is unemployment, people turn on each other.'[90] Nevertheless, the crime historian, J.E. Conklin, sums-up the arguments by pointing out that perhaps it is all a question of convenience and responsibility. As he concluded:

People apparently find it easier to attribute crime and deviance to personal failings rather than to underlying social causes. If they blame crime on the nature of criminals, they are more easily absolved of responsibility for the 'sick' individuals who commit offences, whereas they might feel more responsibility for 'sick' social conditions if they were viewed as the primary cause of crime. However, people will not always take responsibility for deficient social conditions, since they may think poverty or dissatisfaction with the income distribution will always be present.[91]

As referred to in the Abstract, what features in the following chapters is an analysis of the debate on crime and unemployment as it pertained to South Wales. In terms of structure, chapters two and three basically examine the inter-war period and chapters four and five the Nineties. With regard to content, an attempt has been made to canvass a broad cross-section of opinion, from religious leaders, magistrates, editors, chief constables and so on. To achieve this there has been a heavy reliance on the newspapers of the region; the reason for which has been famously outlined by Lord Macaulay who insisted that 'the only true history of a country is to be found in its newspapers'.[92] In addition to these, the archives at the University of Wales at Swansea and Cardiff, Dyfed-Powys Police Headquarters, Swansea County Hall and the Central Reference Library have been exploited. It is here that many of the official reports and documents are contained. Throughout, the aim has been to attempt a balance between the primary and secondary sources and recorded interviews. Some overlap in terms of dates and geography has been unavoidable.

The same applies in respect of certain themes which are explored along similar lines in each period. It is to the first of these chapters that we now turn.

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WESTERN MAIL, THURSDAY, F

WHY MORE PEOPLE STEAL:

WANT OF WORK; LOW WAGES AND BETTING

CARDIFF POLICE CHIEF'S CONCLUSIONS

YOUTH HOLDS LAW IN CONTEMPT

"It is generally admitted that the police, by their close contact with those possessing criminal tendencies, are in the best position to speak as to the causation of crime and, that being so, the conclusions reached are that the increased stealing was due to several related causes, namely, (1) unemployment, (2) low rates of wages to employed persons, and (3) dissipation of wages and insurance benefits in vice and the pursuit of enjoyment."

Thus the Chief Constable of Cardiff (Mr. J.A. Wilson) in his Annual report presented to the city watch committee on Wednesday.

"There was a time when many

Child Caught Begging Outside High Street Hotel

Duty of the Churches to the Unemployed

churches can't say 'no' through churches in the true sense of

Rare Opportunity for Action

By Principal THOMAS PHILLIPS

May I be permitted to answer some of the questions provoked by my interview with your representative a week ago? I cannot escape from the unemployment feeling more than I could escape from the depression of the valleys at night and see as being a right as you can meet the boys of the blunder in up into district of numerous slums; and the thought that



The Listener

All communications should be addressed to the Editor of THE LISTENER, Serovy Hill, London, W.C.2 The articles in THE LISTENER being mainly reprints of broadcast talks, original contributions are not invited. Articles in THE LISTENER do not necessarily represent the views of the B.B.C.

The Increase of Crime

ACCORDING to Mr. Justice McCardie, there has been a serious increase in crime in our country during the last twenty years. On the one hand the number of indictable offences known to the police has mounted up by over one-third; on the other the number of persons against whom proceedings have been taken has slightly fallen. Therefore the machine for protecting society seems not to have been able

POLICE REVIEW - DECEMBER 1931

THE INCREASE IN CRIME

POLICE AND MINOR OFFENCES

Crime today is much greater than it was at any time in the last 60 years; his is a question asked by a respondent who has his Lordship, Mr Justice McCardie claimed



Chapter Two

Unemployment: A Paradox and a Great 'Social Evil'

In 1936, King Edward VIII encountered face to face the despair and desolation that was the South Wales valleys. At Dowlais, amid the disused iron and steelworks, the King uttered the now historic words 'Something Must Be Done'. A few years later, the 'best Welsh language writer of his generation', Saunders Lewis, shocked by the despair, hopelessness and decay that lay around him in the South Wales valleys, penned the words:

The dregs arose from the empty docks
Across the dry ropes and the rust of cranes,
Their proletarian flood-tide crept
Greasily humble, to the chip shops,
Loitered, blood about the feet of policemen,
And spread, a lake of siliconic spit,
Through the faceless valleys of the industry
of the dole.[1]

Few would disagree that in the midst of the Great Depression, South Wales was, as the journalist Mario Basini put it, 'a monument to unemployment, poverty, hopelessness and decay'.[2] A land of 'men and tips standing idle', as Saunders Lewis saw it.[3] Etched into the memories of those who lived through those years, will forever be the images of a desolate industrial landscape, once productive, which had become 'distressing, totally destitute and ugly'.[4] As the **Economist** aptly put it in 1931, a one time 'el dorado' had become a 'no man's land'.[5] However, if the inter-war years were anything, they were years of paradox which, for some people today, are fondly remembered with a sense of nostalgia. It was, as social historians continue to evince, a unique period in British social history when houses were affordable, when food was cheap and when Hollywood emerged to become the 'cinematic opiate' of the people.[6] Underneath it all there was a 'strong community spirit'.[7] Nevertheless, for those that suffered and experienced

something of the hardship of that time, the bitter memories and scars of destitution and social decay run deep. For these, 'the victims', as George Orwell put it, the phenomenon of unemployment had changed the basis of social normality.

In South Wales, the threat to social normality in the form of unemployment and poverty understandably invoked a response. Overwhelmingly, and viewed against a backcloth of industrial decline and the waning fortunes of a once vibrant economy, the political Left have been prompted to write and, in some cases, revise, the history of the inter-war years. For instance, according to historian, Chris Williams, this writing of history has revealed a number of interesting features; from the degree to which ordinary people became involved in society in Wales, through to the extent to which communities became increasingly cohesive and politically mature. Understandably, unemployment, was anathema: it was undoubtedly the greatest threat to communities and established institutions - from the choirs and dramatic societies through to the chapels, public houses and cinema; a threat which, according to some historians, occasioned a collapse of 'the normal structure of societal living' and 'seriously reduced the strength of traditional institutions'. According to Williams, the Left:

...identified social evils that demanded remedies:
tuberculosis, the absence of pit-head baths for miners,
poor housing, unemployment, and the destruction of what
they understood to be Welsh culture.[8]

Furthermore, it was the response to the effects of unemployment that gave certain institutions, such as Coleg Harlech (founded by Thomas Jones in 1927) and the Workers Educational Association (WEA), a significant, ameliorative credence as they adjusted to the phenomenon of mass unemployment. Nevertheless, in a political sense South Wales was certainly well-adjusted or 'manifestly vibrant', as Williams put it, with the Labour Party providing an 'all embracing party culture that...reinforced group loyalties' and made significant in-roads towards attracting women into the political arena. The extent of this across the South

Wales Coalfield was such that, by the early 1930's, some 45 per cent of individual Labour Party membership was made up of women.[9] However, in spite of there being a discernible sense of political progress and social maturity, unemployment remained. According to *The Times* in 1928, the enforced idleness synonymous with industrial depression had created a wasteland; a region where, from one community to another, 'unemployment had descended like the ashes of Vesuvius'.[10]

The paradox of the inter-war years is characterised by the fact that there were those who remained relatively unaffected by the economic and social changes that occurred. Typically, for those who were privileged, well-off or earning 'respectable' salaries, life was actually quite good. For those lucky enough to be in employment in the new consumer industries based in the Midlands and the south-east, ie. car production, chemicals, engineering and electrical goods manufacturing, there were 'added-in' benefits of falling consumer prices.[11] Also, new industry workers witnessed substantial increases in the level of real wages,[12] which, according to the *Economist* of 1935, was directly responsible for the marked increase in the sale of motor cars and houses.[13] A *Times* correspondent simply commented that this was 'a wonderful age of prosperity'.[14]

Table 2.1

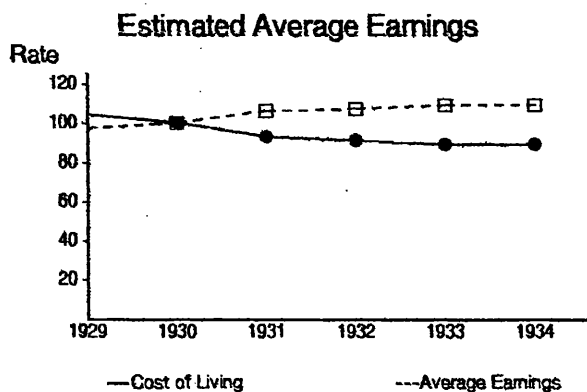
Estimated Indices of Average Annual Real Earnings
1929-34 (1930 = 100)

YEAR	COST OF LIVING	AVERAGE ANNUAL REAL EARNINGS
1929	103.8	96.5
1930	100.0	100.0
1931	93.4	105.6
1932	91.1	106.5
1933	88.6	108.8
1934	89.2	109.2

H.W. Richardson, *Economic Recovery in Britain 1932-39*,
London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1967, p.109

The above table highlights the fact that while the indices of real earnings increased by 12.7, the cost of living declined by 14.6. The table below, on the other hand, shows the same data interpreted on a line graph:

Graph 2.1



H.W. Richardson, *ibid.*

The improved fortunes both economically and socially of those actually in employment led certain commentators in the press of the day to assert that unemployment should be kept in perspective.[15] Moreover, it was argued, unemployment was not something new: it had occurred one hundred years previously and was a feature of industrial life; but then, as now, the upswing in the economic cycle would reverse the fortunes of the workless and return them to a state of employment.[16] Furthermore, the editor of the **South Wales Daily Post** also pointed out in 1931 that the 'employed' still outnumbered the 'unemployed' by three to one, adding that the plight of the unemployed was not really that bad given their 'occasional charabanc trips on dole days in favoured localities'.[17] More recently, the economic historian Keith Lomax suggested that the issue of inter-war unemployment may well have been over-emphasised given that there was indeed a significant amount of economic progress. For instance, he argued that in the period 1929-1935, the indices of industrial production in the U.K. increased from 113.3 to 127.9(1924=100).[18] In certain newspapers too, unemployment was not the main issue of the day. Far from it, insisted **The Times** in 1934: the markedly contrasting fortunes of the new

industrial areas were the beacons of 'another Industrial Revolution...rebuilding British industry on healthier, brighter and more prosperous lines'.[19]

Regardless of the existence of such a paradox, if one feature stood out from everything else in the inter-war years it was mass unemployment. It was undoubtedly the dominant social issue of the time and, according to Reverend Hughes of the National Free Church, speaking in Swansea, a great 'social evil' whose victims deserved every sympathy.[20] Although the causes of inter-war unemployment were complex, or as the *Economist* put it, 'due to world causes beyond the control of any single government',[21] it is sufficient to say that the impact of economic change fell most severely on the 'old staple' industries such as coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding and textiles.[22] This was particularly true in South Wales after 1929 on the basis of the numbers of workers employed in each industry :

Table 2.2

SOUTH WALES (including Monmouth) 1930		
TRADE	NO.	% of all Employed
Iron and Steel	49,926	17.1
Coal Mines	172,026	58.9
Factory Trades	85,094	29.1
Engineering	10,139	3.5

M.P. Fogarty, *Prospects of the Industrial Areas of Gt. Britain*, London: Methuen & Co., 1945, p.88.

Mass structural unemployment was a regional phenomenon with areas such as Scotland, the North East and South Wales being struck a severe blow. For the insured working population in the 1920's and 1930's, this translated into an average rate of unemployment of between 10 and 25 per cent respectively. As the level of international trade went into an acute decline, unemployment in Britain soared to unprecedented heights. Between 1927 and 1928, unemployment increased from one and a quarter million to one and half million.[23] By 1932, the

figure reached 2.7 million.[24] Exacerbated by the political and financial crisis of 1931, during the winter of 1932-33, unemployment in Britain topped the 3 million mark.[25]

In South Wales, unemployment was regarded as being more severe than in any other region of the United Kingdom. As Sir Percy Watkins put it: 'Unemployment is twice as bad in Wales than in England.' [26] In Brynmawr, for example, 59% of insured workers were unemployed in 1929.[27] By 1934, the figure had reached 74%; in Dowlais 73% and in Merthyr 66%. In the comparatively less affected areas to the south and west such as Neath and Swansea, unemployment throughout the depression years never fell below 22%.[28] For Wales as a whole, unemployment averaged between 22.8 and 36.8% in the period 1928-1932.[29] Furthermore, prolonged or long term unemployment was, once again, more severe in Wales than anywhere else. As Fogarty's inter-war study has shown:

With 4½ per cent of the insured population of Great Britain; Wales contained 19 per cent of the workers unemployed for 12 months or more in December 1936.[30]

By 1936, the Pilgrim Trust investigation concluded that the Rhondda was experiencing long-term unemployment of 63% with 11,000 men out of work.[31] With that in mind, and in spite of its 'region within a region' nature due to greater industrial diversity in the south and west[32] and greater demand for anthracite as opposed to steam coal, unemployment was regarded as a universal problem in South Wales.[33] As one commentator put it:

Let this be perfectly understood: there is no work obtainable, except by luck, anywhere in South Wales.[34]

The Strain On Community: An Emerging Debate

As part of the Liberal Pledge of 1929 on unemployment, a trained observer was sent to South Wales to join a queue of men outside an employment exchange. His report stated that what he saw was 'enough to make you cry...a tale that shames

civilisation'. [35] Widely acclaimed to be the most thorough analysis into unemployment for its time, the Liberal Pledge asserted that South Wales was a conspicuously 'devastated area', where unemployment had created a 'tragedy of human suffering'. Unemployment, it claimed, was the word:

..written on the hearts of British people, and graven on their minds...by far the biggest single issue before the country. [36]

In South Wales, unemployment blighted not just isolated communities but a whole industrial region spanning broadly from Carmarthen and Llanelli in the west to Monmouth in the east, and from the top of the valleys at Brynmawr, Tredegar and Dowlais to the coastal strip in the south. In the period newspapers and reports of inquiry, there was widespread condemnation of unemployment and also a fear of the potential dangers threatening the structures of communities. Consequently, a Royal Commission on Unemployment in 1932 sounded a warning about unemployment, inadequate relief measures and the threat to community as a result of crime. It stated that:

An unemployed man without benefit of transitional payment...is a danger to the community and this must tend towards an increase in crime. [37]

Not unusually, observers commented that unemployment was the single most important issue that threatened the national life of Wales. It was argued that in the wake of unemployment, a host of social problems would be created and nurtured because the 'spirit' and 'backbone of the nation' was being destroyed. According to historian, Peter Stead, these fears were understandable because 'employment and the wages it produced had been so basic to the industrial economy that society soon realised that it was confronted by a totally new problem'. [38] Consequently, unemployment in Wales was reported to be straining the strong and traditional sense of community, built-up over generations, to breaking point. And, whilst newspapers of the political Left and

Right were scathing to different degrees, the message was basically the same. For instance, an article on unemployment in Tylorstown in the Communist newspaper **Workers Weekly** commented as early as 1925 how:

The struggle for existence is revealing itself more glaringly and its form is more open. To see workers forced to sell bits of their home, getting up sweeps, and crime....in order to make some sort of a living is enough to make a class conscious worker mad.[39]

Three years later, in 1928, a **Times** correspondent reported that since the pits had closed, 'the literal truth' was that South Wales had become a 'social disaster'.[40] In particular, the valleys of mid-Glamorgan were now:

the backwaters of the world - desolate places where community loyalty was rapidly disappearing in an atmosphere of suspicion and suppressed bitterness.

Essentially, the report suggested that with mass unemployment now an 'urgent and national concern' in South Wales, the 'inevitable' issue of crime would become increasingly apparent. However, as **The Times** saw it in 1928, the real concern of crime was yet to manifest itself in any physical sense, as the following extract suggests:

Quietly, for crime is not increasing yet, they feel the degradation of their sudden poverty.[41]

By 1935, according to the editor of the **Herald of Wales**, the question to be addressed was not 'how much unemployment' but the fact that unemployment had become 'the main basis of local life': this was the concern that communities needed to address, he argued.[42] In a letter to the editor in the same year, the comment was made that 'manpower is rotting' under 'vast and progressive unemployment'. Unemployment, insisted the writer, was solely responsible for the terrible poverty of the people and the effect on communities was profound because 'the war-begotten were growing up into a blighted manhood; wayward, ignorant, and unstable'.[43] Further concern was expressed by Edward Williams of the East

Glamorgan Baptist Association at a meeting in Dowlais. For Williams, the situation in Wales had reached a stage where only two alternatives existed - 'Christ or Chaos', as he put it, adding:

Instead of the new world promised after the war, one had a world full of disappointment and restlessness - a world verging on collapse. With unemployment at its peak and thousands starving in the midst of plenty, civilisation had reached the brink of destruction. [44]

These 'community' concerns were underpinned by political debate. For instance, the Christian politician and leader of the Labour Party, George Lansbury, argued in the early 1930's that unemployment simply meant 'desperation'. This was, he insisted, the reason why more people were now stealing to survive.[45] More specifically, he argued, for children of poor backgrounds unemployment and poverty were key factors in understanding the sudden upsurge in the criminal and delinquent behaviour of the young.[46] Furthermore, in February 1933 Lansbury reaffirmed these views in the House of Commons when he commented that poor law relief was so grossly inadequate as to be responsible not just for the general increase in crime, but, more specifically, for the rising levels of lawlessness amongst the younger unemployed. As he put it: 'Can anyone wonder at this increase in crime among young people.' In London, however, Lansbury also concluded that the recent increase in crimes against property of 200 per cent would prove to be more expensive in the long run than raising the level of poor law to a more adequate level.[47]

In South Wales, the strain of unemployment and its associated problems increasingly emerged as a matter before the courts. One commentator suggested that the reason for this was quite simple in that 'people would do anything to make up for lost income...even if it was illegal', adding, however, that people would always seek legal means first such as letting out rooms to those in employment.[48] However, such measures further exacerbated the strain on community and family life. In the community of Brynmawr, for instance, Hilda Jennings found that the letting of rooms led directly

to 'a good deal of social overcrowding and the forcible closing of houses unfit for human habitation'.[49] Added to this, however, was the problem of large, unemployed families - where six or more children were commonplace - together with the commonly held view that unemployment relief was comparable to working wages as illustrated by Table 2.3. Thus, the driving down of wages from 1926 onwards to the level of unemployment relief meant that the incentive to work was also being eroded.[50]

Table 2.3

AVERAGE INCOMES

Persons in Family	Husband or other adult Employed		No Earners Working Members Unemployed	
	Average Income	No. of Cases	Average Income	No. of Cases
2	32s.11d	7	26s.3d	32
3	39s.10d	8	30s.9d	15
4	35s.7d	10	32s.6d	18
5	42s.1d	5	34s.2d	12
6 and over	40s.3d	4	40s.7d	15

A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust, **Men Without Work**, London: Cambridge University Press, 1938, p.206.

Various sources from the inter-war period highlighted the emerging link between unemployment, poverty and crime.[51] According to the **Times Literary Supplement** of 1933, this link was something that should be understood within the context of the times: the environment of unemployment was a 'vicious circle' which was breeding men, women and children with 'diseased minds and bodies' which inevitably 'would break out in concerted lawlessness'.[52] Moreover, the link with crime was strongly underpinned by the findings of social investigators who concluded that the rising level of crime, particularly against property, was a direct consequence of unemployment.[53]

In South Wales, the negative social impact of unemployment was broadly condemned for its threat to community life. Increasingly, it emerged to become a potent concern; from 1931, the year that the editor of the **South Wales Daily Post** spoke of the 'corrupting boredom of the loitering hours',[54] through to 1935, when the Chief Constables of Swansea, Cardiff and Neath unanimously expressed their discomfort about the declining economic

situation and rising levels of crime.[55] Likewise, unease about the coincidence between rising crime and unemployment was widely noted in the comments of prison governors.[56] Perhaps not surprisingly, too, politicians of the Left seized the issue as another way of attacking the Government.[57] On occasion the growing fears of chief constables were understandable. In the St Thomas area of Swansea, for instance, the charged atmosphere amongst unemployed dock workers would sometimes deteriorate into open brawling. Arguments, it seems, would erupt 'about anything and nothing', with the local 'Bobby' reluctant to intervene.[58] One reason suggested for police apprehension to intervene in these incidents was that on some occasions, anger was directed at the police themselves. Whilst there were recollections of 'fights galore' and 'policemen with more brawn than brains', it was an unwise decision for the local 'Bobby' to get involved: many of the incidents in Swansea were sparked by unemployed men and women who had 'taken to drinking meths [and] probably didn't know what they were doing'.[59] Added to this came reports of 'unruly mass meetings' of 'unemployed, starving men', such as occurred in 1931 at Baldwin's Field, Manselton, Swansea.[60] At Cardiff, too, in the same year, a similar report described how a large meeting of unemployed men degenerated into 'disturbing' and 'violent scenes'.[61] However, these outbursts by the unemployed were arguably not that surprising to the chief constables of the region trying to maintain law and order. They would not have been oblivious to reports, for instance, insisting that in the Rhondda, over a thousand unemployed were receiving no benefits whatsoever and up to three thousand children were at the point of starvation.[62] According to Clifford Protheroe of Neath Regional District Council, the continual ignorance of this situation was 'tantamount to murder'.[63] Whilst some, then, spoke of these reactions as indicative of a 'poor law breakdown',[64] others bore testimony to what they saw happening around them. Namely, as one report in the **Herald of Wales** put it: 'suffering far beyond the imagination of most people.'[65]

Begging

In South Wales, there were a number of ways in which crime and lawlessness emerged. In the main towns along the coastal belt, for instance, came reports that shoplifting, larceny from the person (pickpocketing) and begging by children and adults in city highstreets had increased significantly.[66] According to a study carried out in the 1920's by Hugh Massingham, these reports were 'tragic and pitiful'. Unemployment and poverty, he argued, had reduced ordinary people to a level where they were forced to 'scrape together an existence by stealing and begging'.[67] In complete agreement was Harland Gilmore who, in the 1930's, noted that the depression in both Britain and America had made the poor and destitute a common sight on the streets of major towns and cities; leading him to conclude:

Among us today are street beggars, peddling mendicants, begging swindlers, tramps and transients, child beggars and gentlemen beggars. They are frequent sights.
[68]

In 1933, a Children and Young Persons Act was introduced as an adjunct to the Vagrancy Act of 1898 - which dealt more specifically with offences of begging. The main aim of the legislation was 'to improve social life and reduce the criminal population' and, together with the 'care and protection' sections of the Act, to safeguard the interests of the neglected child.[69] Legislation in this respect was seen as vital because of the 'close connection between neglect and juvenile crime'.[70] Before the Act became law, and under the heading 'Crime and the Child', **The Times** in 1932 commented that such legislation was needed primarily to deal with the 'alarming increase' of child related offences as a consequence of unemployment.[71] In a debate in the House of Commons in the same year, Mr Oliver Stanley commented that the new Act was vital and should even be extended to those over 16. As he put it:

It should be introduced to curb begging - a major concern - the age should be extended by one year from 16 to 17.[72]

In complete agreement was Mr Rhys Davies who added:

I know of nothing more pathetic than the case of boys who are sent to our industrial schools for begging, wandering and being destitute.[73]

According to Stanley, however, the offence of begging was a wide and multi-dimensional social issue. As he maintained:

The child's upbringing at home, the discipline he receives in the home or the lack of it, the economic conditions under which he lives, the squalor and misery of his life..have had much to do in turning that child into an offender than any spirit of natural evil.[74]

According to a number of sources, unemployment was seen as a primary cause of children turning to crime. For instance, in a Magistrates' Association report, findings suggested that unemployment and poverty led to an increase in child neglect for reasons of 'exploitation for financial gain'.[75] Under the Act, the categorised offence of 'Using a Person Under the Age of 16 for Begging', was part of a list of offences considered by the report as 'recognised social evils' for 'which society was predominantly responsible'.[76] In addition, these concerns were amplified by the view that children were much less restrained in families where unemployment was the normal condition of life. In particular, there were specific fears relating to the increase of crime amongst children under the age of 14 and still in secondary school.[77] According to Sir John Simon, MP, this concern was widespread;[78] an opinion echoed by social investigators Carr-Saunders et al., who also found that there was a rapid increase in criminality amongst boys between the ages of 8 and 13.[79] Furthermore, this report also asserted that delinquency was far worse in situations of parental unemployment, with evidence suggesting a close connection between a father's unemployment and crime committed by children.[80]

As soon as the Children and Young Persons Act(1933) became law, Swansea became the first city to prosecute a case

of child begging.[81] In other parts of South Wales, particularly in towns such as Llanelli and Carmarthen, concern about the problem materialised in the quarterly and annual reports of police chiefs. The Chief Constable of Carmarthenshire, for instance, was clearly relieved that the introduction of the Act would address the problem of parents 'causing their children to beg' - especially on the streets of Carmarthen.[82] However, at a Hearing in January 1934, an insight into the scale of the problem in South Wales was revealed by a stipendiary magistrate. Essentially, he commented that begging by very young children in city centre areas in South Wales was on the increase and in danger of getting out of control. Having been personally moved by the nature of one case - which involved a child caught begging outside a High Street hotel in Swansea - the magistrate made his own inquiries into the problem in the town and concluded that there 'was far too much of this kind of thing going on in the town'. He added that the real blame for these offences lay not with the children but with the parents, whose responsibility it was 'not to neglect or encourage their children in this way'. Future cases, he claimed, would be heavily punished in order to act as a deterrent and this would be irrespective of personal circumstances. As he put it:

Parents must take active steps to prevent children standing outside hotels and shops in the town begging.[83]

Under the Act, however, standard sentencing varied between 3 months' imprisonment and/or a £25 fine.[84]

According to the findings of Willem Bonger, children became associated with begging because of what he termed the 'detestable atmosphere' of unemployment. Moreover, he claimed that unemployment in the inter-war years led to the systematic exploitation of children by their parents, who 'forced' their offspring onto the streets in an effort to find money. As he put it:

All those who have taken up this subject are agreed that a great proportion of the children are systematically taught to beg by their parents.[85]

Another inter-war study of juvenile delinquency in England and Wales, by Cyril Burt, confirmed that begging by children was the second most common offence they committed. Although falling far behind offences of stealing, his sample accounted for just under 10 per cent of all reported cases.[86] Nevertheless, Burt found that it was 'by no means difficult to beg or pilfer', particularly around main station areas and suggested that the younger the child, the greater the returns from begging. As he put it: 'If you are small, you can make as much as 5 shillings in less than half an hour.' The most rewarding age, he claimed, was around 5 or 6, because a child easily attracted the sympathy of passers-by. Begging, he added, was 'a profitable line of work'.[87] Furthermore, in tandem with the findings of other investigators such as Carr-Saunders, Ferguson, Mannhiem, Wootton and Simey, Burt concluded that the problem of begging in recent years had emerged out of a depressing social environment. He claimed that with 'Father..often out of work and somewhat hasty in temper', unemployment was 'unquestionably connected' with this type of delinquency amongst young people.[88]

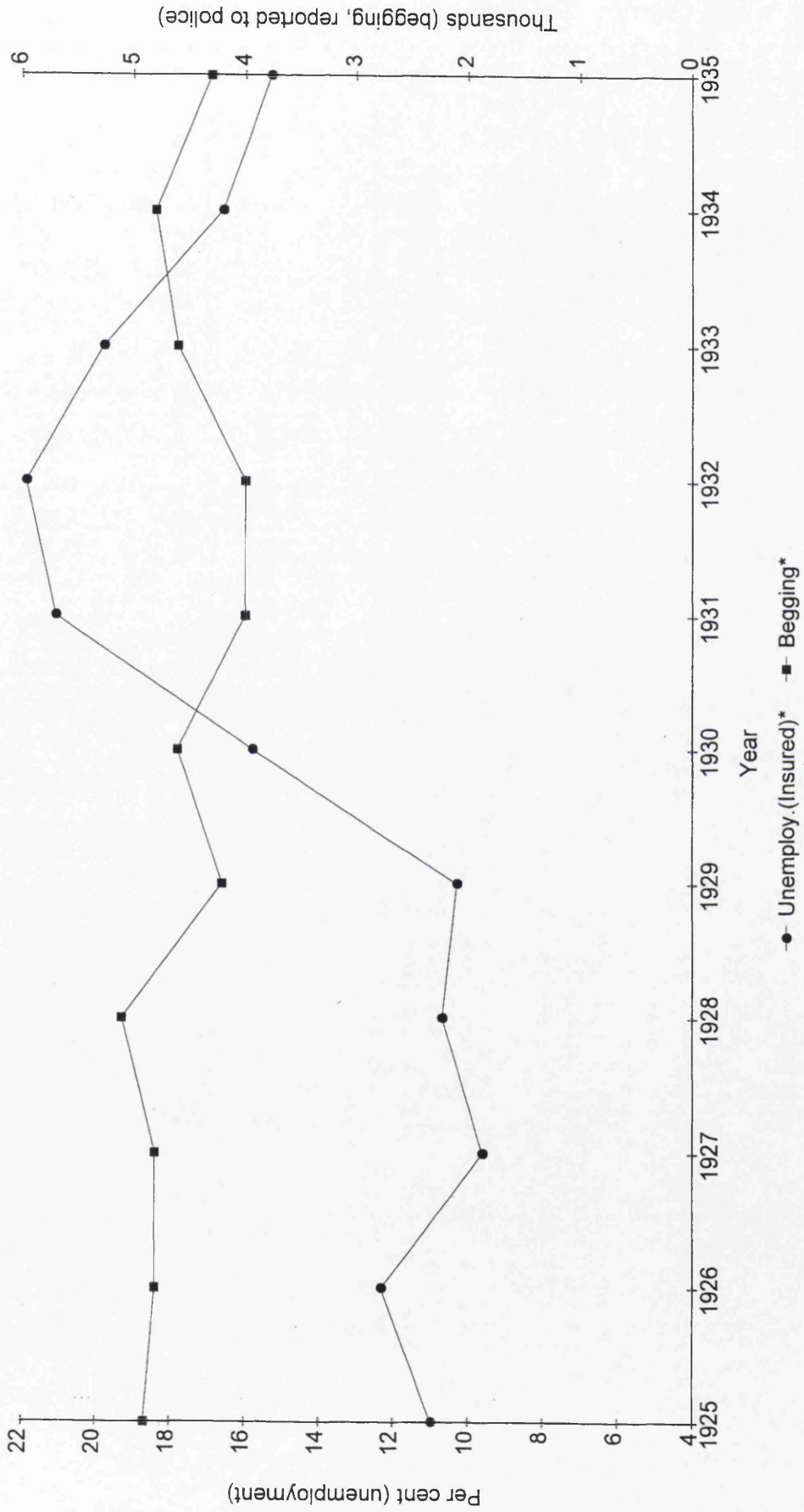
The above concerns fell in the wake of various reports of inquiry. For instance, the National Association for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) insisted that not only were children being increasingly abused in this way, but their fate was actually worsening. For example, in January 1932 the **South Wales Daily Post** reported that the national figure of reported cases of child neglect stood at just under 4,000. However, in Swansea there was a distinctly upward trend in the figures with 98 supervision visits made and 62 newly reported cases; representing an increase of 34 per cent over the previous month.[89] Furthermore, in 1934 the Swansea School Attendance and Child Welfare Committee (SSACWC) received a deputation from Swansea Trades Union Unemployed Association (STUUA) to provide meals specifically for children found in desperate circumstances wandering

around the town. In the **Herald of Wales** and under the heading 'Swansea Child Sufferers', SSACWC insisted that such measures were vital as a means of negating a problem that was deteriorating almost daily.[90] Notwithstanding such claims, and accepting that the offence of begging was recorded in the chief constable reports of Swansea as non-indictable, evidence from the reports also suggested that the same offence committed by adults was reluctantly prosecuted in the Courts of South Wales.[91] In 1929, for instance, only one in three were proceeded against with the remainder being discharged.[92] This finding was reiterated by Professor David Jones who found that begging offences, which reached a peak in the period 1909-1912 when some 1200 cases were heard in South Wales, were prosecuted to a much lesser degree under the more recent Vagrancy Act of 1924.[93]

If prosecutions in relation to begging in the inter-war years were relatively few, then the chief constable reports for Swansea give some indication as to why this was the case. For instance, the reports prepared under Chief Constable Thomas Rawson, particularly after 1929, clearly advocated the increased use of cautioning for a whole range of minor offences. More specifically, Rawson actively encouraged this approach amongst his officers where juveniles committing minor offences such as 'begging, Sunday trading and motoring offences were concerned'.[94] Elsewhere, evidence suggested that begging was an uncomfortable issue for the Courts with cases often being reluctantly prosecuted. This also held true in more serious cases of begging involving adults. For instance, in the **South Wales Daily Post** under the heading 'Glynneath Men In Trouble At Cambridge', a report described how eight unemployed miners from Glynneath had travelled 'from town to town' in England and 'earned' £145 over a two-month period. For the offence at Cambridge Borough Police Court, the men received relatively lenient sentences considering the scale of their operation, with punishment ranging from one to three months' imprisonment to complete discharge.[95] Graph 2.2 below, which illustrates a close relationship between begging offences reported to the police and unemployment up until the mid 1930's, also highlights a

Graph 2.2

Unemployment and Begging England & Wales



H. Mannheim, Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1940, p.128. * [Male & Female]

converse correlation in the period 1931-34. It could be inferred that such a change, albeit for a short period of time, may well be reflective of two things: a heightened awareness of the problem of begging by the authorities and the public in advance of legislation, thus leading to greater tolerance and understanding; or perhaps more plausibly, the trend towards an increased use of cautioning. Whatever, the trend of sympathetic sentencing and the increased use of cautioning was also noted in Gilmore's sociological study in 1930. Essentially, the conclusion reached was that begging was indeed a classic example of one offence that was 'tolerated and understood' within the hardships of the time.[96] However, after the Act of 1933 and in the period leading up to 1938, attitudes in this respect may well have begun to change: the number of persons found guilty of offences against the Act increased by a significant 40 per cent as indicated by Table 2.4:

Table 2.4

Offences Against Children and Young Persons Act (1933)

Year	Magistrates Courts	
	Person dealt with	Persons found Guilty
1933	668	559
1938	1058	932

Great Britain: 'Cruelty to and Neglect of Children', Report of a Joint Committee of the British Medical Association (BMA) and Magistrates Association, London: BMA, 1956.

Finally, evidence gleaned from interview reinforces the claim made by some that begging emerged out of the hardships of economic depression and social adversity. For instance, in an interview with Mrs Bertha Freeman, born in 1912, and who lived during this period opposite Swansea's Central Police Station, begging was one issue that was etched clearly in her mind. In the interview transcript she recalled how seeing people begging was 'a distressing feature of everyday life'. Her own account, which is similar in tone to the recollections of other interviewees, but more vivid, described how:

Everything seemed much more congested back then..lots of narrow streets and whole families living in just one room. Begging by very young children - always with trays round their necks, terrible to see, was commonplace in Oxford, College and High Streets. Cardiff was worse - much worse... There was so much unemployment and so many vagrants too, but the parents didn't like to beg so they sent their children, that's what I think...There were some adults, like 'Willy Sook,' he danced for tea...[and] 'Billy No Arms', who stood at the market entrance. He was always there, always smartly dressed, he'd pass the time of day with you...a nice character who lost both arms in the First World War.[97]

Shoplifting and Pickpocketing

In addition to reports of begging, came separate accounts of shoplifting and pickpocketing. Once again, reports, especially in newspapers, suggested an association with unemployment and the poor social circumstances of apprehended individuals.[98] According to David Jones, however, it was not always unemployed males who had recourse to this kind of theft, but women and children too. Reflecting on what he termed the 'difficult years' of the 1930's and 1980's, Jones commented:

Clothing and food...remained favourite targets, and women and children, together with unemployed males, have always committed a large share of the offences, often travelling long distances to collect the goods.[99]

With that in mind, evidence from the 1930's suggests that young and middle-aged women became increasingly involved in both of these offences. Many, it seems, 'specialised' in this area of criminality, with their 'targets' being mainly the High Street stores and High Street stations of towns along the coastal belt of South Wales.[100] In a wider sense, too, the **Times Index** of 1933 underlined the increasing impact of female crime, by illustrating how almost every case of shoplifting reported from April to December in England and Wales was committed by a female.[101] For that reason, claimed Edward Grout:

Shoplifters form a class by themselves. They are always of the female sex.[102]

Furthermore, in response to these concerns in South Wales, the sociologist Ms Cecil Chesterton stated in the **Herald of Wales** in 1931 that, offences of both pickpocketing and shoplifting were, and 'always had been', the traditional domain of women. For reasons worthy of detailed research, she claimed, women seemed 'curiously drawn' to these offences and, on the whole, seemed 'especially adept' at carrying them out.[103] However, according to Grout, women were attracted to these offences during times of hardship because they required less courage than burglary and a certain degree of 'manual dexterity'. As he commented:

The burglar needs courage and enterprise that are not required by the pickpocket. The pickpocket requires manual dexterity of a kind that would be of little use to the burglar; and hence we find that the burglar is never a pickpocket, the pickpocket never a burglar.[104]

According to a number of newspaper articles, pickpocketing was a problem associated with crowded areas such as bus and railway stations. On the one hand, reports described how victims would often be relieved of items such as wallets and jewellery. Frequently, too, it seemed these encounters were clearly desperate affairs where the value of stolen items amounted to relatively little. For instance, Irene Probert (29) was fined £2.00 for stealing at Neath bus station a purse containing 3s. 6d. from Jennett Ann Jewell. After having been observed by PC Owen - who was on 'pickpocket duty' - to join several bus queues and rifle through people's pockets, Probert was eventually apprehended. Upon further questioning, Probert admitted the offence but pleaded for mercy in sentencing as she was a woman 'living on her own with three children to keep'.[105] Other cases, however, showed evidence of much more organised and professional theft. For example, at Cardiff railway station in 1928 came reports of pickpocketing by a 'professional criminal class'. Targeting certain individuals and their luggage, one report described how perpetrators would frequently work in pairs; the 'typical scenario' involving a

man to distract attention, while his female counterpart emptied the contents of the victim's bag.[106] On another occasion, and under the heading 'Double Theft Mystery', the **Cardiff Times** reported how a Cardiff salesman was robbed twice on the same day. On the first encounter, jewellery worth £100 was taken from the railway carriage in which he was travelling. Later in the day, whilst attending the afternoon meeting at Cardiff races, pickpockets relieved him of the entire contents of his wallet.[107]

Problems such as these did not go unnoticed. On the one hand, some inter-war investigators noticed the problem of recidivist behaviour. For instance, in 1935, Jeremy Hall, in his work **Theft, Law and Society**, found that many pickpockets simply had no other means of earning a living and returned time and time again to their misdeeds following prosecution. As he put it:

The thief returns immediately to his trade of picking pockets, the legislature is incapable of removing this deplorable evil from society.[108]

Regardless, the Chief Constable of Cardiff, James Wilson, was determined that something should be done to deal with the problem - especially following concerns raised by members of the public. Consequently, his initial response involved the drafting-in of extra police officers in order to deal with those responsible for 'robbing passengers' both on the trains and at the station itself. Eventually, in a bid to partly allay the fears of travellers, a report in the **Cardiff Times** attested that extra vigilance by the police was beginning to have a positive impact on public confidence. The report also attempted to reassure passengers that while:

..many of the thieves are practised hands, they are well known by the police, who watch their comings and goings most carefully.[109]

In the late 1920's and early 1930's, shoplifting showed a distinct upward trend. In towns such as Cardiff and Swansea, where the chief constables of both areas referred to the increase in their Annual Reports, the offence seemed to reach

a crescendo in the early 1930's.[110] In his Annual Report for 1933, for instance, the Chief Constable of Cardiff, Mr James Wilson, stated that minor larcenies such as shoplifting had 'doubled over the previous nine years'. As he put it:

There were now many more minor thefts than in the past. Offences in relation to multiple stores - such as shoplifting - were also serious. There were now 200 to 300 cases a year.[111]

Commenting on the problem in 1927, the criminologist Edward Grout insisted that this upward trend was almost to be expected: the wares of the large department stores were simply too tempting for the 'hungry thief'. Little wonder, too, he argued, that perpetrators often worked in gangs and travelled considerable distances to commit these offences. Consequently he advised the owners of the large stores to be not just more vigilant but to be more discreet in exhibiting their goods, because: 'where costly stocks are exhibited in profusion.. the thief is afforded every opportunity'.[112]

The newspapers of the region provided a number of clues about those involved in the offence of shoplifting. Essentially, they disclosed findings relating to circumstance, gender and the type of items involved in thefts. For instance, a 1928 report in the **Cardiff Times** described the antics of three 'notorious' Swansea shoplifters. Under the heading 'Three Swansea Women In Trouble At Cardiff', the article revealed that Evelyn McGlynn (29), Agnes Davies (31) and Mary 'The Wax' Rees (29) were repeat offenders of the worst kind when it came to relieving department stores of their property. The report claimed that with their husbands unemployed, and each having large families of four or more children, the three women stole items from shops on an almost 'wholesale' basis. On this occasion, the items stolen included clothes, attache cases, bedding and clocks - all of which were hidden in perambulators and valued at a considerable £56.[113] Interestingly, and as an aside, evidence from elsewhere

suggested that these same women may have been involved in prostitution. Mary 'The Wax' Rees was a well-known prostitute who, in 1930, was found brutally murdered on Swansea Beach. And, while speculation inferred her killer was probably a merchant sailor, no-one was charged with the offence and the case remained 'open' for many years. [114] Nevertheless, in other reported cases the value of stolen goods was much less. In 1931, for instance, the **Herald of Wales** described how Sarah Jane Davies (31), a married, but separated, unemployed woman from Ammanford was caught stealing and receiving items from various stores in Swansea. On this occasion, her proceeds from crime, which included a wireless worth £3.19s, were valued at less than £4.00.[115] Elsewhere, the chief constable reports for Swansea have shown, for instance, that items targeted by thieves were usually valued at no more than 5 shillings.[116] Meanwhile, newspapers such as the **Cambria Daily Leader**, **South Wales Daily Post** and **Western Mail** consistently provided an insight into why the majority of items stolen were indeed of relatively low value. Typically, reports revealed that perpetrators sought nothing more than everyday items such as food and clothing.[117]

Shoplifting in Cardiff and Swansea was a particular problem during the winter months. In the winter of 1929, for instance, the scale of thefts was such that many of the major stores across South Wales were forced to employ full-time store detectives for the first time in order to curb the level of stealing. According to one report in the **South Wales Daily Post**, such crime prevention measures were to be welcomed; the impact of which was almost immediate:

These detectives know the suspected characters who, when they see the former, clear out of the shop.[118]

By 1931, Chairman of the Bench at Cardiff, Mr Thomas Jones, stated that the 'evil' of shoplifting still 'certainly existed'. In spite of measures designed to deter, he argued, the only way left to deal with the problem was to impose much stiffer sentencing. He was, as he put it:

..determined to protect the shopkeepers who were being

robbed day after day and week after week.[119]

By the late 1930's, however, a general directive from the Council of the Magistrates' Association stated that while stiffer sentencing had been imposed in many instances, it was a response that did not seem to work with this category of offence. The Council, echoing the comments of Edward Grout in 1927, argued that what was needed was a more responsible attitude by shopkeepers and traders who were simply making 'displays too attractive and goods too accessible'. In re-issuing its warnings of previous years, the Council also claimed that it was still 'gravely concerned at the widespread thefts from popular stores', adding that it was the responsibility of traders to do 'all that is practicable to prevent petty theft'.[120]

Evidence gleaned from interview provided personal accounts of shoplifting as well as clues relating to motives. One interviewee, who spoke from personal experience of shoplifting, vividly recalled the nature of these offences, the frequency with which they occurred and some of the reasons which underpinned them. For example, according to Mrs Rita Jones* from the St Thomas area of Swansea, shoplifting was most common when husbands became unemployed, were on low wages, or in situations where there were simply 'too many mouths to feed'. Shoplifting, she insisted, 'happened all the time' but was 'never really like stealing' because usually it was food or clothes - 'things that everyone needed'. Reflecting on her own experience of being brought before the Court, Rita recalled:

I don't mind telling you but me and my friend from Pant Street were caught red-handed in Woolworths with some clothes. Well, we had nothing..nobody did..and we'd take what we could - food from the stalls, clothes, anything really. Anyway, when we were caught in Woolworths we were really shamed. But we were desperate, you know, really hungry and this is what we said when we went up in front of the Magistrate...I tell you what, we didn't tell anyone where we was going that day..and then the buggers fined us 30s. - a week's food and lodging. Well, we couldn't believe it.[121]

In another interview, however, it was revealed that some

shoplifters were notorious figures who regularly came into conflict with the law. For instance, there was 'Jayna Blue', a violent and abusive drunk who would cause almost riotous scenes whenever she was apprehended. Another well known figure was 'Sally Sawdust', who used to collect and sell sawdust and 'steal whatever she could along her way'. [122] Nevertheless, aside from these recollections, an interesting observation from the interviews in general was that shoplifting was something considered as a relatively minor event. It was not 'really stealing', as one put it, but was understood within the context of the times; a claim that rang equally true for those who could see no alternative whatsoever to their predicament but to take their own life.

The Crime of Suicide

In his inter-war study of crime, Hermann Mannheim said that although economic types of offence were the primary concern in the study of crime, this did not mean that certain other offences against the State were any less relevant. Suicide, he claimed, and its relationship to unemployment was one such example. [123]

In the inter-war years, the offence of suicide was recorded as non-indictable. In the newspapers such as the **Cardiff Times** and the **South Wales Evening Post**, it was also an offence which was often reported with considerable detail and frequency. In some publications, two or three cases of suicide were reported per day. [124] Furthermore, in a random sample of five publications of the **Herald of Wales** in January 1931, 5 cases of suicide and/or attempted suicide were recorded. Table 2.5, which gives some illustration with regard to age and gender, was one of a number of samples and was chosen mainly because the employment status was included within the report:

Table 2.5

AGE	SEX	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	OFFENCE	OTHER
55	Female	Unemployed	Suicide	
48	Male	Baptist Minister	Suicide	
22	Male	Unemployed	Suicide	
30	Male	Unemployed	Suicide	
N/A	Male	Labourer	Attempted	Fined / or 7 Days

Herald of Wales, January 1931

In spite of the above, the numerous reports of suicide and attempted suicide - offences which were decriminalised in 1960 - were in accordance with published Home Office statistics which showed that two unemployed workers were committing suicide everyday in the 1930's.[125] In 1934, such concern in relation to the figures meant that the Minister of Health was asked to account for a 60-per cent rise in the number of suicides among men under 25 over the period 1921-31.[126] In Wales, a coroner commented in the **Western Mail** that while many of these suicides among young people appeared to be motiveless at first, many may be related to the transition from boyhood to adulthood; a factor, it was claimed, that should include juvenile unemployment.[127] In the House of Commons, politicians such as George Lansbury were especially concerned. In 1933, Lansbury commented in a debate on crime and the economy that the recent spiralling of suicide cases was a reflection of the hardship caused by an economy in depression. As he put it:

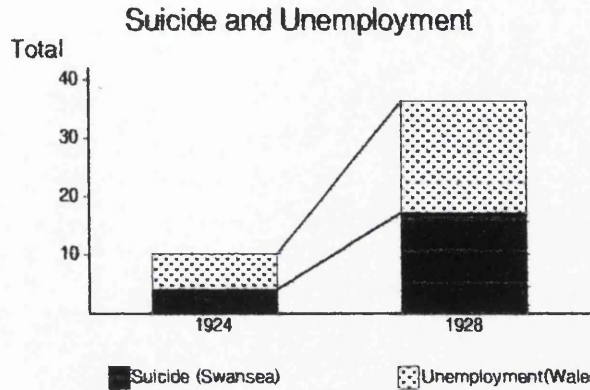
There is scarcely a day but one reads of suicides and murders. Most of them are attributable to sheer despair.[128]

More recently, writers such as John Stevenson have shown that it was the long-term unemployed who were particularly prone to the extreme measure of taking one's life. Citing a number of examples, he observed:

Usually these were men who had been out of work for several months, such as the case recorded in the **Birkenhead News** for January 1932 of an unemployed mechanic found hanging from a tree in Tranmere Woods, who was reported to have been out of work for fifteen months and became depressed; or the following autumn of a man who committed suicide following six or seven months out of work..on whom the coroner gave a verdict of suicide 'with evidence of depression from unemployment and illness'..[or] of a Birmingham man who, having been unemployed for years, drowned himself after going before the local means test committee, having his relief reduced to 10s. 9d per week and being threatened with its removal altogether.[129]

If the subject of suicide has one over-riding weakness, it is in the area of statistics; suicide statistics being notoriously unreliable in the inter-war years. Mannhiem, for instance, claimed that this was because the figures were 'completely dependant upon the changing attitude of the local police'.[130] With this in mind, evidence from the reports of the chief constable in Swansea disclose that suicide in the town increased by a factor of 4 over the worst years of the depression. In 1924, for instance, only four cases of suicide were recorded. By 1928, this figure had increased to 17.[131] Whether or not the figures relating to suicide were at the mercy of coroners' verdicts or police interpretation, the trend was an upward one broadly in line with unemployment. However, a longer comparison may have been more useful had a longer series of figures been available. The reports of the chief constable at Swansea archives do not survive after 1933 and, in addition, do not always include statistics for suicide in subsequent and previous years; a feature underlining Mannhiem's claim.

Graph 2.3

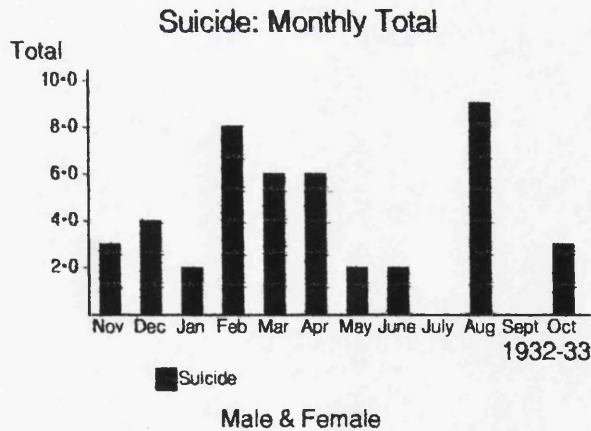


[Male & Female]
 Swansea County Borough Police, **Annual Report of the Chief Constable, Swansea, 1924 & 1928**
 Government Statistical Service: **Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics**, Vol. 1, Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1985.

In addition to Graph 2.3 above, which highlights a four-fold increase in suicides in Swansea over the period 1924 - 28, a survey of reported cases in the **Western Mail** for the one-year period 1932 - 33, gives some idea of the monthly variations of suicides committed. Whilst August presents the highest figure, it is noticeable that the rate is consistently high throughout the winter months; a factor consistent with the findings of the Samaritans throughout the twentieth century. [132]

Graph 2.4

Western Mail 1932 -33

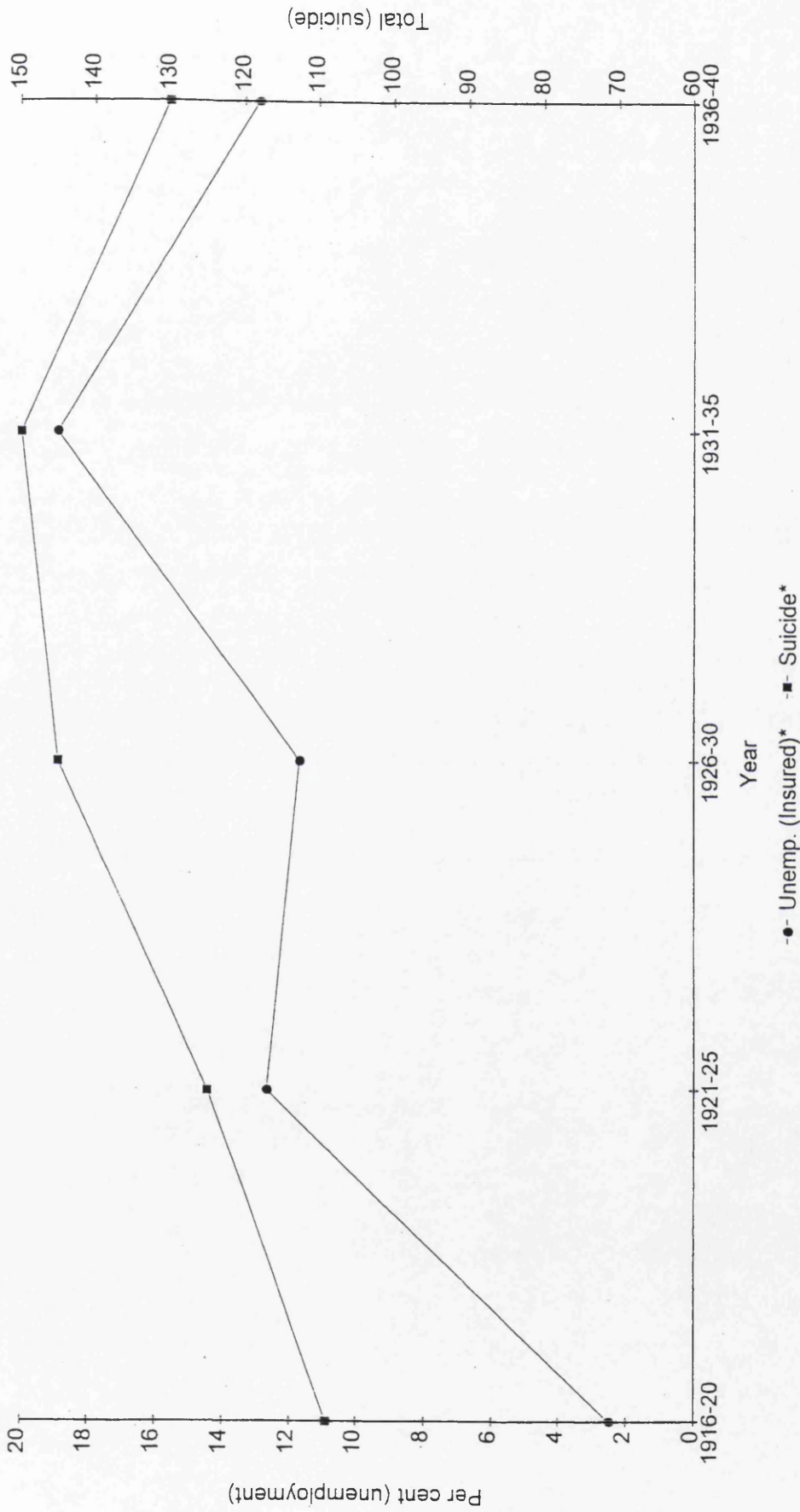


Western Mail, November 1 - October 31, 1932 - 33

However, Graph 2.5, overleaf, provides a much longer series of suicide figures. Conspicuously, it illustrates a very close relationship between the total number of suicides and the fluctuations of aggregate unemployment. Moreover, it

Graph 2.5

Unemployment & Suicide
England & Wales



60a

H. Mannheim, Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1940, p.128. * [Male & Female]
Government Statistical Service: Mortality Statistics: Serial Tables. Series DH1, No. 15, 1985, p.15.

highlights that suicides reached their peak at almost exactly the same time as unemployment.

In the inter-war years a number of studies argued that unemployment and poverty were largely responsible for the increase in suicides. For instance, according to a 1920's study on crime and unemployment by Dorothy Thomas, it was argued that the incidence of suicide in England and Wales was so close, that statistical findings unveiled a correlation of -0.5 between unemployment and suicide. Poverty and unemployment, asserted Thomas, were strong motivating factors in the aetiology of suicide.[133] Similar findings were revealed by medics and psychologists in both Britain and America: for instance, F.Hopkins in 1937; A.W.Stearns in 1921; and M.Moore in 1937; all of whom concluded that economic distress in the form of unemployment and poverty was the main motive behind the act and attempt of suicide.[134] Other contributors, such as Paul Sainsbury, who examined a sample of 390 cases of suicide in London over a two-year period, claimed that social factors were responsible for the majority of suicides and attempted suicides. Citing fellow investigators such as Erwin Stengel, Sainsbury affirmed that within the 'social category', the experience of unemployment could be singled out as an important factor underpinning the motive to commit the offence. As he put it:

Case studies...suggest that unemployment and economic distress are sometimes among the factors determining the attempt.[135]

Table 2.6 Causative Factors in 390 Cases of Suicide in North London, 1936 - 38

FACTORS	CONTRIBUTORY IN PER CENT OF CASES 1936 - 38
Social	60%
Personal	20%
Physical illness	29%
Mental Disorder	47%
Other	17%

Paul Sainsbury, *Suicide in London*; London: Chapman & Hall, 1955, p. 20

As a result of his investigations, Sainsbury concluded that not only were the number of suicides among the unemployed much greater than among the employed population, but the depression of 1931 and the despair it engendered amongst those who were unemployed, contributed directly to the highest level of suicides in the entire inter-war period.[136]

The offence of suicide was perhaps the most extreme of the non-indictable offences included on the crime list. For those who saw it as a way of dealing with the problem of unemployment, it would, for some, be the one and only crime they committed and a disturbing reminder to others of the importance of work. As one commentator recalled:

He was a miner. After the General Strike he never found work again. He cut his throat one afternoon in 1931. It was July. I can remember it like it was yesterday. I came home from school and found him. He'd left a message on the looking glass written with a cake of soap, saying he was sorry. He was my father...[137]

As an offence against the law, suicide and attempted suicide seemed in many cases to be a clear and disturbing illustration of how a criminal offence could be recorded and subsequently associated with unemployment. Nevertheless, some commentators have argued that to prove an absolute link between suicide and unemployment has always been difficult due to the nature of the act of suicide itself and the circumstances surrounding the event.[138]

In the newspapers of the day, cases of suicide and attempted suicide as mentioned previously, were reported in considerable detail. In many instances, these events were recorded in such detail and elaborated upon so frequently in the press, that attempts were made in the House of Commons in the early 1930's to prevent their publication. It was also considered by some Members of the House that the publication of 'last letters' of suicides were simply 'too disturbing'. It was a trend which ran counter to the public interest.[139] With that in mind, it was also clear that some newspapers were very much concerned about such an adverse reaction to unemployment. For instance, in 1928 **The Times** raised the

matter in relation to the South Wales miners, claiming that the loss of work had meant that many simply had 'nothing left to live for'. [140] Furthermore, Michael Lieven in his work on the community of Senghennydd found that while press reaction to spiralling suicides tended to be mixed, reports may well have provided a degree of explanation with regard to cause. As he put it:

It seems likely that the uncertainty of the times was partly responsible for the growing numbers of suicides as the crisis worsened... [but] at least the times produced a degree of compassion: by contrast when John Pember, who had been unemployed for nine months had hanged himself from his bedstead, the report had been headlined: 'Coward's Suicide'. [141]

Meanwhile, newspapers such as the **Western Mail** described how fatalistic sentiment was a feature which characterised those who had obviously tired of the cycle of unemployment, offence and conviction. As Edgar James Tyler (24), a persistent thief, stated to the judge at Bridgend:

I have made up my mind to leave this world for good. I have nothing to live for in this world of temptation and this will be the last time I shall appear in any earthly Court. [142]

In some cases, the inclination to commit suicide was accompanied by the intent to include other members of a family. The inference being, that the loss of work and the inability to care for one's family in a state of unemployment was beyond comprehension. For example, in 1931 the **South Wales Daily Post** reported the circumstances of an incident involving William John Corbett, an unemployed collier aged 35. Under the heading 'Girl's Grim Struggle For Razor In Workless Miner's Home', the report explained how Corbett faced a murder charge against his wife; the attempted murder of his daughter; and his own attempted suicide. At the court hearing, the circumstances leading up to Corbett's actions were elucidated. As the facts of the case unfolded, it became evident to the Court that Corbett was in arrears with his rent, had six children to feed and only 38s. a week unemployment relief. Conceding that he was 'very depressed

because he was out of work', Corbett stated: 'I intended to do myself in and the rest of the children'. Knowing that he faced the death penalty, Corbett made a direct plea to the Judge saying:

During the past twelve or fourteen weeks there has been nothing over my head but a dark, red cloud, worrying over my children for food and clothing, and things for my wife as she was about to have a child.

Corbett's defence barrister, Mr Trevor Hunter, enforced the plea by claiming 'insanity due to depression brought on by unemployment'. In spite of this, however, Corbett was given the death sentence and was duly executed at Cardiff prison in July 1931.[143]

A similar case to the above was reported in the **Herald of Wales** in January, 1931. At Westbury Street, Swansea, Richard John Walters(22) from Neath, succeeded in taking his own life but failed with that of his fiance. At the inquest, she explained to the Judge the circumstances of Walters' actions adding that 'unemployment was his downfall'. Having been made redundant as a mason's labourer, and on the day of the incident, Walters was reported to have said:

I am fed-up with everything. I have lied. I have got no money coming to me, and I am out of work...I am going to end it all.

In his suicide note printed in the press, Walters added:

I am doing this because I am in everybody's way...I am not insane or mad. Abide with me.[144]

In the inter-war years, the sudden loss of employment arguably nurtured a pattern of behavioural experiences which ultimately led some individuals to take their own life. According to certain commentators, this altered state has been variously described as a 'changed attitude to life', 'psycho-neorosis' or 'fatalism'. [145] In crude terms, the loss of work meant that the world had come to an abrupt end. In the opinion of one contributor, to work and have employment in the years between the wars was inestimably

important:

To work was precious because it was your life. It meant that you had some sort of life. If you had no work, you had no life and no reason for it. It was that simple really.[146]

A disturbing example of the above sentiment was reported in the **South Wales Daily Post** in November 1931. The report described how a former South Wales journalist for the **Sporting**, Henry Woods(40), was seen by a large number of people to be waiting at the edge of the platform at Charing Cross, London. When a train approached and was only a few feet away, he threw himself under its wheels. At the inquest, the Coroner described how on that day, Woods had been discharged from his employment and, in a distressed state, decided to take his own life. The Coroner was in no doubt that unemployment contributed to his death. As he put it:

This man has been discharged from his employment. I am satisfied that he had got to the end of his resources and decided to seek a way out by taking his life...Only a halfpenny was found on him.[147]

Reports of suicide and attempted suicide in the inter-war years disclose that unemployment may well have underpinned the decision by some individuals to take their own lives. In the press, references to 'unemployment' or 'slackness of work' were a feature of a number of detailed reports, making it difficult to argue that the phenomenon of unemployment was not in some way connected.[148] What was also noticeable, especially from interview, was that it was something of a taboo subject amongst ordinary people. In Swansea, for instance, when somebody had committed suicide it was frequently referred to as 'a body in the bay', regardless of where the suicide took place. One comment suggested that this was because people didn't like the word 'suicide' or to refer to it when it happened.[149] Another agreed that it was indeed a term of dismissal.[150] In the press, however, no such term of reference was found.

Evidence derived from the chief constable reports at Swansea suggest that the Courts were generally lenient in cases of attempted suicide. In 1928, for instance, there were only two recorded prosecutions in Swansea.[151] However, there were exceptions. For instance, in the case of an attempted suicide in Port Talbot, one Phillip Evans was charged not only with the offence itself, but he was also ordered to pay the full cost of his rescue. At the Hearing it was recalled how after stating his intentions to his friend to end his life, and ignoring pleas to the contrary, Evans leapt off a bridge into the freezing waters of a canal in early January, 1931. Some time later and with the arrival of the emergency services, Evans was rescued. In Court, the magistrate took a harsh view of Evans' actions and immediately imprisoned him for seven days. In addition, Evans was ordered to repay the full cost of his rescue - £3.00 - and, regardless of his personal circumstances, told never to repeat the offence again.[152]

To conclude, it must be said that while the inter-war years were paradoxical in the sense that unemployment was a regional phenomenon, for those who were affected, such as the workers of South Wales, mass unemployment spawned a debate that focused on the impact of worklessness. For many commentators, unemployment was simply a 'great social evil', gnawing away at the roots of community life that traditionally had remained stoical. Increasingly, concern was evinced that ordinary people were turning to crime in an effort to make ends meet. On occasion, too, there was evidence to suggest that they turned on each other in frustration of the fact that work had disappeared and social normalcy had been turned upside down.

In various ways, unemployment was seen as being responsible for a number of people becoming increasingly 'wayward and unstable'. In terms of offending, some could see no other way but to seek desperate alternatives by begging, shoplifting and picking pockets. Tragically, in extreme cases, fatalism dealt a mortal blow that led to the committal of a traumatic crime: suicide. However, all of this was nothing more than testimony to the earlier

remonstrations of religious leaders who had warned of only two alternatives - 'Christ or chaos'.

Statistically, many of the offences were considered as minor and were reflected as such on the non-indictable list of categorised crimes. At the same time, some correlation existed between the fluctuations of the unemployment figures and the pattern of crime. According to academics, magistrates, ministers, chief constables and social investigators, such comparisons were in line with contemporary thinking. Indeed, there was something of a consensus grounded, as some saw it, in common sense. For that reason, certain reformers argued a case for raising Poor Law relief as a means of tempering the 'need' for ordinary people to commit offences in the first place. Elsewhere, commentators expressed a degree of understanding and tolerance by placing these actions within the context of the times. Nevertheless, while some contributors, such as the Chief Constable of Cardiff, noted a 'doubling' of certain types of crime and responded with the deployment of more police officers on the beat, others were relieved that new legislation might begin to address some of the problems. Meanwhile, at Swansea, the increased use of cautioning urged by Chief Constable Thomas Rawson as a means of curbing the rise in minor offences was, arguably, much to the relief of Magistrates tiring of similar cases coming before the Courts.

Many of the offences dealt with here have been of a less serious nature. In terms of the debate, they have attempted to serve and illustrate the more subtle aspect of criminality and the link with social environment. However, this pattern is only partly complete. The inter-war years witnessed a debate that functioned at a much deeper level as a consequence of offences regarded as far more serious: offences which appeared predominantly on the indictable list. It is to this aspect of the debate which we now turn.

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Chapter Three

A 'Whirlwind of Crime': Communities Debate

The newspapers of the inter-war years paint a depressing picture of life in South Wales. With the phenomenon of unemployment deeply embedded in the social life and social mentality of Wales, the issue of crime emerged to become a focus of debate in its own right. Across South Wales, both geographically and socially, 'crime and unemployment' materialised as ignoble social concerns, regarded by a considerable body of opinion to be clearly inter-related. In the period 1927-34, specifically, there was a discernible change of attitude underpinned by a growing sense of crime-fear and a deeper awareness of a growing contempt for law and order. The effect of this was to bring the debate out into the open and it invited consideration of related issues such as punishment and deterrence. Meanwhile, it increasingly became apparent that there existed something of a consensus suggesting that unemployment drew in its wake a threat to community life in the form of crime and deviancy.

Community Leaders and Moral Opinion

Although crime and unemployment had been debated in previous years of industrial depression, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the mid 1920's to the mid 1930's the topic became increasingly conspicuous. Symptomatic of its intensity, the debate became progressively animated in the press of the day. It also appeared that attitudes had changed if only by the fact that grievances were seemingly voiced more willingly as the depression wore on. However, the impact of this was profound, as newspapers and social investigators provided the evidence to challenge the later mythology of the 'good old days' or of the 'policeman on every corner' being able to maintain law and

order. If anything, this revision was undoubtedly the outstanding aspect of the debate and, as the comments below tend to show, not surprisingly so. For instance, it is known, and a matter of record, that in 1929 the residents of Swansea consistently complained of the 'difficulty of tracking down a police officer' when one was needed.[1] A few years later in 1935, a similar criticism was levied against the Chief Constable of Llanelli in the columns of the **Herald of Wales**. Following a series of burglaries, and as a response to the high level of thefts from domestic properties in Llanelli, the inhabitants complained that the fifty police officers patrolling the town and surrounding areas was 'hopelessly inadequate' for coping with the crime problem.[2] Perhaps even more telling was the growing contempt for the law and for the police officers themselves. As Superintendent H.J. Gunston of Swansea complained:

Assaults [*sic*] against the police, especially by young men in their twenties, is becoming increasingly prevalent.[3]

Contempt for the law was an issue addressed in the **Western Mail** by the Chief Constable of Cardiff in 1933. In his Annual Report for the previous year, he claimed that in South Wales there was now a 'clear disregard of moral obligations and a growing contempt for the law'.[4] A similar concern was expressed in the columns of the **South Wales Daily Post** in 1931, when Mr Hopkin Morgan, the Chairman of Magistrates at Neath County Police Court, remarked that 'we are living in times when the police must be protected'.[5] He was particularly mindful of the increase in the number of attacks by civilians on police officers; a problem which also found expression in the Watch Committee Minutes of Swansea in 1929-31.[6]

In 1933, the Chairman of Pontypridd and Rhondda Licensing Sessions, Mr Enoch Davies, intimated that times had clearly changed for the worse. There had been in recent years, he claimed, a seachange amongst the people of Wales. There was now:

a whirlwind of crime...passing over this country and so

far has been increasing in severity. People now delight in defying law and order, both legal and moral.[7]

However, this view had already been brought to public attention two years previously, when the editor of the **Herald of Wales** cogently pointed out that the level of crime in Wales was manifesting itself as social conflict. There were now, as he put it, 'people among us who - because of Original Sin - are at war with society'.[8] Nevertheless, to Sir Percy Watkins in his address to the mayor and the people of Llanelli, none of this had been all that surprising. Vindicated by his warnings of previous years, Sir Percy claimed that unemployment at its root had a 'very serious character' which left those afflicted feeling 'mentally, spiritually and morally displaced'. Unemployment, with all its social consequences, he claimed, was the issue that every member of the Llanelli community now needed to address urgently.[9]

The above views found an echo in the concerns expressed by the editor of the **Western Mail**. In 1933 he stated that:

It follows that the general community ought to accept in a larger degree the responsibility which is commonly delegated to the police.[10]

However, such uneasiness, particularly at the height of the depression, became increasingly expressed in a discernible fear and a greater awareness of crime and the activities of the criminal. It was this change - a deviation of social and moral normality - that led the Chairman of Glamorgan Quarter Sessions to note that the fear of crime was such that people were afraid to go to church on Sundays and leave their homes unattended. Inevitably, then, in the newspapers of South Wales the public were not slow to evince their concerns - and particularly in relation to 'domestic break-ins'.[11]

In response to heightened public awareness, **The Times** newspaper reported in 1928 that crime was reaching 'dangerous', uncontrollable levels and becoming 'rampant'. [12] Five years later, the **Western Mail** reported that crime in South Wales had increased out of all proportion. In Cardiff, claimed the report, crime had more than doubled in

less than 10 years: in 1923 the number of crimes known to the police in the city was 943; by 1932 this figure had reached 1,949.[13] Across South Wales, the increased fear and greater awareness of the crime problem was noted in many different sources and none more so than in the Annual Reports of the chief constables. In Swansea, for instance, the Annual Reports for the period 1928 - 31 point out that not only was there a greater volume of criminal activity, but the public were much more aware of being the victims of theft due to the decrease in the number of 'Premises Found Insecure' by policemen on patrol. In this period, the number of properties found to be inadequately secured fell from 2,338 (1928) to 1,433 (1931), an increase of properties secured by almost 40 per cent.[14] Also, this finding was reinforced by Edward Grout in 1927, who found that the increased risk of property crime was a characteristic feature of the 1920's in general. Pointing to the alarming rise in crimes such as burglary and housebreaking, he warned of the complacency of property owners towards 'the presence within society of a large predatory army of human parasites' prepared to steal anything, at any time and of any value. As far as Grout was concerned, the risk of property crime for ordinary people was considerable and he illustrated this by devoting an entire chapter to precautionary, crime prevention measures.[15] Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the heightened fear of crime was, according to the police, often misplaced, prompting criticism of the press; an issue which we return to later on in this chapter

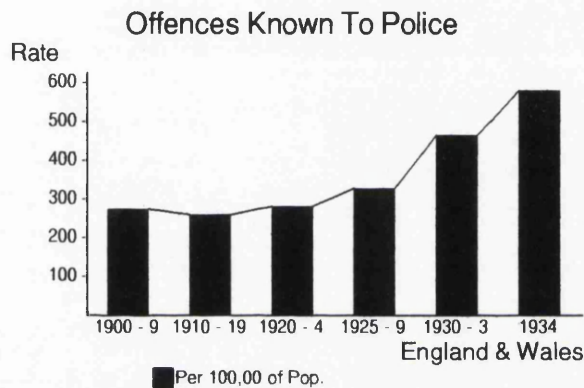
One explanation for the above concerns related to the fact that, firstly, crime was regarded to be significantly on the increase. For example, before the First World War, the annual average of indictable offences in Wales was 6,200. By the late 1920's, this figure had increased to over 10,000.[16] In the 1920's alone, 'crimes known to the police' in England and Wales increased by almost 30 per cent as Table 3.1 illustrates. Graph 3.1, on the other hand, shows that the most significant rise occurred in the period 1925 -34 :

Table 3.1

Year	Crimes known to Police
1920 - 24	106,837
1925	113,986
1926	133,460
1927	125,703
1928	130,469
1929	134,581

S.K. Ruck, 'The Increase of Crime', *Political Quarterly*, 1932, Vol. 3 (2) p. 210.

Graph 3.1



A.M. Carr - Saunders and D.C. Jones,
Social Structure of England & Wales, 2nd Edition,
London: Oxford University Press, 1937, p.186.

A second explanation concerned the apparent, or according to some, inerrant, correlation between the statistics of indictable criminal offences and unemployment. In years such as 1921, 1926 and 1931, the pattern of crime and unemployment was especially well matched. It was this correlation that induced one inter-war observer, Lord Frances Pakenham, to conclude:

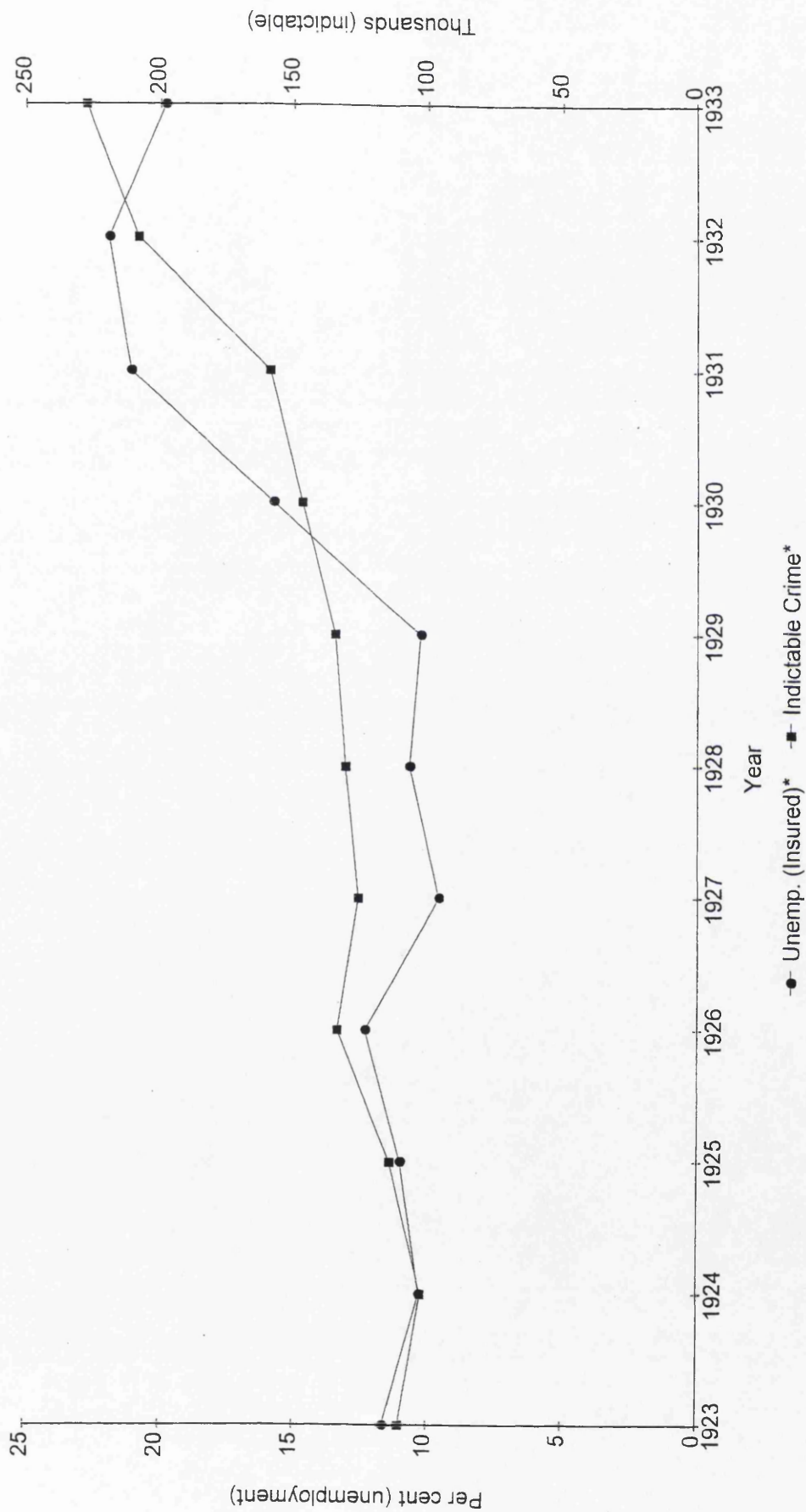
It is easy to understand that the widespread and large-scale unemployment should lead to an increase in crime, especially of larceny, and breaking and entering.[17]

Graph 3.2., overleaf, illustrates the point more clearly over a ten-year period.

In the House of Commons, politicians of the Left reinforced and perpetuated the link between crime and unemployment. In a debate on law and order in Wales, the

Graph 3.2

Unemployment and Indictable Crime
England & Wales

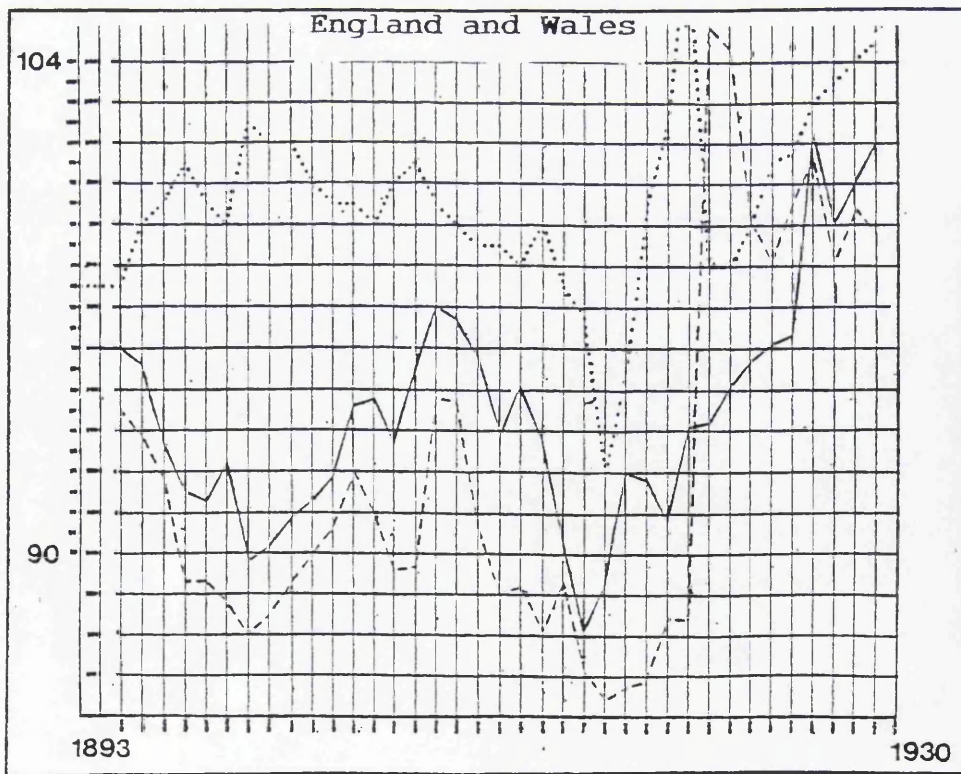


H. Mannheim, Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars, London: George Allen & Unwin (1940) p. 128 * [Male]

I was pleased to hear a reference to the connection between the curve of unemployment and the curve of crime statistics...there is a remarkable coincidence in the undulations of those curves. Most reformers have been convinced for a long time that there was a connection between poverty and unemployment and crime, and in assessing that connection we now have the aid of figures which show with remarkable accuracy the movements from time to time.[18]

The figures referred to by Grenfell were the result of an extensive investigation by S.K.Ruck. Publishing his findings in the *Political Quarterly* of 1932, Ruck produced a graph which clearly illustrated the connection between crime and unemployment. His results, which were referred to in various other reports of inquiry, such as the Pilgrim Trust's *Men Without Work*, were important because they were somewhat pioneering. For the first time in the inter-war years, the debate on crime and unemployment had been given a thorough and extensive statistical analysis which added considerable weight to the printed rhetoric in the columns of newspapers :

Graph 3.3 Relative Movements of Crime, Unemployment and Real Wages: 1893 - 1930



— · — Indictable Offences known to the Police per 100,000 of Population.
- - - Percentage of Unemployment (in Trade Unions 1893 - 1920, among Insured Persons 1921-29).
... Index of Real Wages (1900 = 100).

S.K. Ruck, 'The Increase of Crime', *Political Quarterly*, 1932, Vol. 3, (2), p. 207.

According to Ruck, the debate on crime and unemployment was of 'considerable social importance'. As he put it:

The growth of unemployment readily suggests itself as an explanation in the first place, and the supporting evidence of the chart is strong...the correlation between the two curves is so high that it is difficult to resist the assumption of cause and effect.

To underpin his findings further, Ruck insisted:

there are a number of people who will not consider committing crime when in work, but will do so when unemployed. It is rather a case of mischief for idle hands.[19]

In the House of Commons, Herbert Samuel commented on the conclusions reached by Ruck and stressed:

There is a remarkable correspondence. Almost exactly as unemployment rises and falls, crime rises and falls. Therefore I attribute very largely the present increase of crime to the fact that we are living in a time of extreme economic depression.[20]

Also in the House of Commons, Mr Lovat-Fraser was of similar conviction, but added:

One of my earliest childish remembrances is of my mother repeating to me the lines of Isaac Watts :
'Satan finds some mischief for idle hands to do.'
Those simple lines contain a volume of truth.
Unemployment and idleness conduce to crime.[21]

However, not all politicians accepted the analysis given by Ruck. For example, according to the Conservative MP, Sir Vivian Henderson, crime and unemployment were not that easily associated. In agreement with a fellow Conservative, Mr R. Davies, Henderson stated:

I entirely agree with him that it is grossly unfair to the unemployed themselves to suggest that, because there is more unemployment, there is of necessity bound to be more crime....I agree that you cannot necessarily say that unemployment causes crime.[22]

The potency of Ruck's investigations should not be

underestimated, particularly in terms of their influence on opinion with regard to the debate. In 1932, for instance, the Chief Constable of Birkenhead referred to Ruck's analysis by stating that the recent increase in crime in England and Wales was largely attributable to unemployment. As he put it:

In very many cases it is fairly conclusive that the incidence of unemployment has been primarily responsible for crime.[23]

Also, and in agreement with the Chief Constable, the Governor of Durham Prison commented that many prisons were now being increasingly occupied by inmates who were unemployed and turning to crime. It was this depressing observation which led him to conclude that 'the country is raising a population of unemployables, loafers and thieves'.[24] However, in the Pilgrim Trust's **Men Without Work**, which included a detailed investigation into unemployment in the Rhondda, a practical example of the association between crime and unemployment was given, together with an acknowledgment of the importance of Ruck's findings. In agreement with Ruck's inquiry, the Pilgrim Trust found what it termed a distinct 'causal connexion' between property crime and unemployment, quoting a literary example from its own research. The extract, which is fairly long, stated:

An unemployed man's friendships are largely formed in this way, and when he speaks of 'going about with a few other fellows', that is how he has generally found them. A striking instance of this is one of the small number of men in the sample with prison records ; a man who had served several short terms of imprisonment for house-breaking. He spoke after a time freely of the way in which this had happened. It was obvious that he was potentially a decent sort of man, and he had originally had good work which he left to emigrate. His passage to Canada had been guaranteed , but at the last moment, owing to the illness of his wife, he could not go, and it was impossible for him to get back his old employment: "I'd never done anything of that sort when I was a child, but when I was out of work and we'd very little money I met one or two fellows down at the labour who did that sort of thing and I thought I could do it too. It was

exciting too, and once I got a bit of money that way it was very hard not to go on. But whenever I met a policeman it gave me the jumps, I never knew whether I'd come home again and I always knew they'd get me in the end. I never used to break into a house where there were people, but used to rob the coin meters in empty houses. Of course, I didn't want to take anything that belonged to anyone.[25]

The association between crime, economic depression and unemployment was fairly obvious to those who dealt with prison inmates on a daily basis. As one inter-war observer pointed out:

Of the greatest importance, however, are the results of the systematic observation of prison inmates by prison commissioners, prison governors, chaplains and other officials, as published in their Annual Reports. Hardly anywhere has the overwhelming force of unemployment as a crime producing agency been more clearly recognised than in these documents.[26]

However, one slightly dissenting voice was that of the Governor of Wandsworth prison. In a report in the **South Wales Daily Post**, the Governor declared that:

A growing feature of national life is that people of today seem to think they can live without responsibility. That notion lands them in prison. Unwillingness to accept hard work is another factor. The present spell of unemployment may have something to do with it, but not much. So much is done for the unemployed man today that he has little excuse for indulging in crime.[27]

In South Wales, the views of chief constables across the region were largely unanimous with regard to the adverse effect of unemployment on criminal activity. As early as 1924, for instance, the Chief Constable of Cardiff was reported to have argued that prosperity would return many dishonest people back to law abiding citizens. As he put it:

There is no doubt that when industrial prosperity returns, many who now get their livelihood by dishonest means will revert to honest labour.[28]

Nevertheless, within a decade, in 1933, Chief Constable James A. Wilson repeated the assertion of previous years and added

that his views on crime and its causes should leave nobody in any doubt. In the **Western Mail**, Chief Constable Wilson's conclusions were printed verbatim and stated that:

It is generally admitted that the police, by their close contact with those possessing criminal tendencies, are in the best position to speak as to the causation of crime and, that being so, the conclusions reached are that the increased stealing is due to several related causes, namely; (1) Unemployment (2) Low rates of wages to employed persons, and (3) dissipation of wages and insurance benefits in vice and the pursuit of enjoyment.

Reinforcing his judgement, the Chief Constable added:

Certain individuals are not particular about keeping their hands from picking and stealing as they were in the old days. They do not seem to think it is a crime in these days.[29]

Following Chief Constable Wilson's remarks, the editor of the **Western Mail** commented that he was in full agreement with the conclusions reached. His response in the editor's section, was immediate and resolute. As he put it:

All who are concerned about the moral and social welfare of the community would do well to give studious attention to the observations regarding the increased prevalence of crime which are contained in the Annual Report of the Chief Constable of Cardiff. The position is undoubtedly grave, for the sharp increase in the number of crimes known to the police indicates a disturbing tendency which, if unchecked, may spread with disastrous results.[30]

Meanwhile, similar presentiments emerged from members comprising the Cardiff Probation Committee. In their Annual Report for 1933, the Committee noticed that it was the unemployed who tended to feature more regularly in their probation records. As the Committee declared:

Most persons of employable age, placed under probation in that area [Cardiff], were at the time of the offence either wholly or partly unemployed.[31]

Given that in South Wales the chief constables were of similar accord in that they regarded the increase of crime as being attributable to unemployment, their responses were also

commensurate with the persuasions of chief constables elsewhere. At the Conference of the Chief Constables' Association at Birkenhead, the conclusions of which were debated in the House of Commons, one chief constable declared with overwhelming certainty:

The reason for this increase is the most disturbing feature. From personal experience and observation I am satisfied that the increase, which we hope is only temporary, is mainly to be attributed to the existing industrial conditions and the vast amount of unemployment, with the consequent reduction in incomes. Until these conditions improve, I am very much afraid that there will be no downward tendency in the figures.[32]

However, at the Conference concern was also raised about the increase and prevalence of crime amongst young adults and juveniles. With the issue of unemployment an integral part of the debate, printed sources also revealed that the debate in relation to the younger generation was undoubtedly the outstanding feature of polemic in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

Crime and Youth

In the inter-war years, a number of research studies produced evidence which suggested that the debate on crime and unemployment was particularly distinctive where juveniles of employable age, and young adults under twenty-seven years were concerned.[33] According to Hermann Mannheim, the youth with time on his hands was a 'problem' because he was more likely to get into trouble. He commented that:

The connection between unemployment and crime is particularly strong in the case of juveniles. They are not only most likely to get into trouble when themselves out of work, but also at times of general adult unemployment.[34]

Mannheim also found that in the period 1932 - 33, the ratio of serious juvenile offences in Merthyr increased from

approximately 1:6 to 1:3, with twice as many juvenile offences being committed in the town. In more prosperous Cambridge, on the other hand, there was a reverse trend. However, Mannheim suggested that one explanation for the increase in Merthyr may well have been the increased prevalence of gang activity leading to a greater volume of assaults. By contrast, in Cambridge the nature of criminal activity was different to Merthyr in that the area strangely 'excels in highway offences'.[35]

Table 3.2

Persons Found Guilty of Indictable Offences in Courts of Summary Jurisdiction

	1932		1933	
	Adults	Juveniles	Adults	Juveniles
Cambridge	47	17	55	14
Merthyr Tydfil	253	41	173	51

Hermann Mannheim, **Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars**, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1940, p.143.

In tandem with the above, another social investigator, Cyril Burt, maintained that in the 1920's, the environment of unemployment and the absence of meaningful employment opportunities was crucial to an understanding of adolescent and juvenile crime. As he put it:

Lack of suitable employment, and lack of employment of any sort or kind, are two points of capital importance in considering adolescent crime.

For those just a little older, he continued:

...[the] lack of work may, as we have already seen, lead straight to stealing or immorality, for no other reason than to satisfy the pangs of hunger.[36]

Frances Pakenham was of the same opinion. He asserted that his own investigations led to the conclusion that crime seemed more prolific in cases of juvenile unemployment.

Furthermore, there was a certain coincidence with adult crime. As he put it:

Where there is an unusual amount of adult crime, juvenile crime tends to be heavy, and both occurred more where unemployment was greater.[37]

The comments of social investigators during the worst years of the depression, signified the degree of change which had occurred in criminal behaviour within a relatively short period of time. In 1924, for instance, Inspector Elston of Swansea optimistically claimed on his retirement in the **Cambria Daily Leader** that:

Juvenile crime is on the decrease and much of it was due in the old days to the absence of educational facilities. Parents were ignorant and unmindful of their offspring, but the Education Act did much to eradicate this apathy, and homes are better now than they were.[38]

In the same newspaper a few days later, the Learned Recorder, Rhys Vaughan-Williams, felt it fitting to congratulate the borough 'Upon the comparatively small number of cases for trial'.[39] By June 1933, however, matters had clearly deteriorated when the editor of the **Western Mail** cited the 'Blue Book' statistics for England and Wales as evidence of what had become known over the previous few years as the 'juvenile crime problem'. Taking the figures for 1931, which showed that the number found guilty of indictable offences was 59,367, he asserted that juvenile offenders were 'chiefly responsible for the crime increase'. Nearly all of these offences, he said, were minor larcenies but, most significantly of all, he added, of this figure 42% were under the age of twenty-one.[40] Meanwhile, in his Quarterly Report for October to December of the same year, the Chief Constable of Llanelli, Mr Anthony T. Evans, made a point of commenting on the problem of juvenile delinquency in Llanelli and Carmarthen. Searching for, as he put it, 'the effective solution to juveniles who are a nuisance to the community', he affirmed:

The number of offences committed by young persons is high, a high percentage being persons of the ages 17 - 21, with a still higher percentage of persons under 17...Juvenile delinquency is truly a difficult problem to tackle. They wander about the streets aimlessly and late at night with oft-time painful consequences.[41]

Furthermore, in the **Police Review** of 1931, Mr Justice McCardie, known for his outspoken views on criminal matters, contended that the upward trend in crime amongst the under thirty-year-olds was clearly a worrying concern for each member of the community. As he put it:

Perhaps the gravest feature of recent years is that the number of boys under 16 who were found guilty of indictable offences is very much larger in 1931 than in 1907. There has been a regrettable increase in crimes by people between 16 and 21, and also between 21 and 30. These facts must cause concern to every responsible citizen.[42]

In 1931, the editor of the **Herald of Wales** stated that magistrates across South Wales had reported that they were perplexed by the problem of youth crime. In a quandary about what to do with repeat offenders, they concluded that the whole issue of juvenile crime was 'a hazardous business' which left them 'gravely concerned'. A most noticeable feature, claimed the editor after spending a morning at the juvenile Court in Swansea, was that unemployment was regularly used as an excuse for delinquency by juveniles. Inevitably, though, there were some dissenting voices; as the father of one young man commented to the Magistrate: 'although he is unemployed, there is no excuse for wrongdoing'.[43] Nevertheless, according to an extract from a Royal Commission on Unemployment published in the **South Wales Daily Post** of 1931, the younger generation had good reason to blame unemployment for their misdemeanours. In many instances it found that when juveniles reached the age of 18, many employers simply turned them out of work because they had reached insurable age. The official report stated:

At that age, juveniles who had not prepared themselves for a man's job were put out of employment because they could not give a full return for an adult's wage.[44]

However, on top of all this, the President of the National Union of Women Teachers, Ms Carol Fisher, declared that young people had to contend with a growing culture of delinquency, family breakdown, and poverty. These were the 'real issues' that young people were having to face up to as a result of unemployment, she argued. In stressing concern about the undercutting of men's pay, leading to more women being employed at a cheaper rate and many young men therefore becoming unemployed, thus perpetuating the cycle, she asserted:

I need not stress the tragedy of these young lives of unemployed boys and girls who come from homes where often fathers, brothers and sisters are also unemployed.[45]

According to Colonel Charles Rich, DSO, the problem of crime amongst the under 27-year-olds did not bode well for the future. In the **South Wales Daily Post** he commented that 'the outlook for the future is serious'. In considering the fact that many more people were now committing first-time offences, he argued that the implications for reforming the wayward was reaching irredeemable proportions and must include a greater emphasis on discipline and punishment in prisons. Simply teaching prisoners 'foreign languages' and 'engineering', he added, meant that 'instead of making a better citizen, you have merely turned loose a more dangerous criminal'. [46] However, in the **Herald of Wales** in 1934, the Chief Constable of Swansea, Mr F.J. May, did not agree and was much more optimistic when he stated: 'We can turn them into real decent fellows.' In his address to the Roundtable at the Hotel Metropole, the Chief Constable commented:

We all know that owing to the present economic situation, thousands of lads are leaving school doomed to an existence which has nothing in store....I feel that no boy should be allowed to drift into a life of crime. As a policeman I contend that my first duty is the prevention of crime. It seems to me of little use to bring boys into Court time after time.[47]

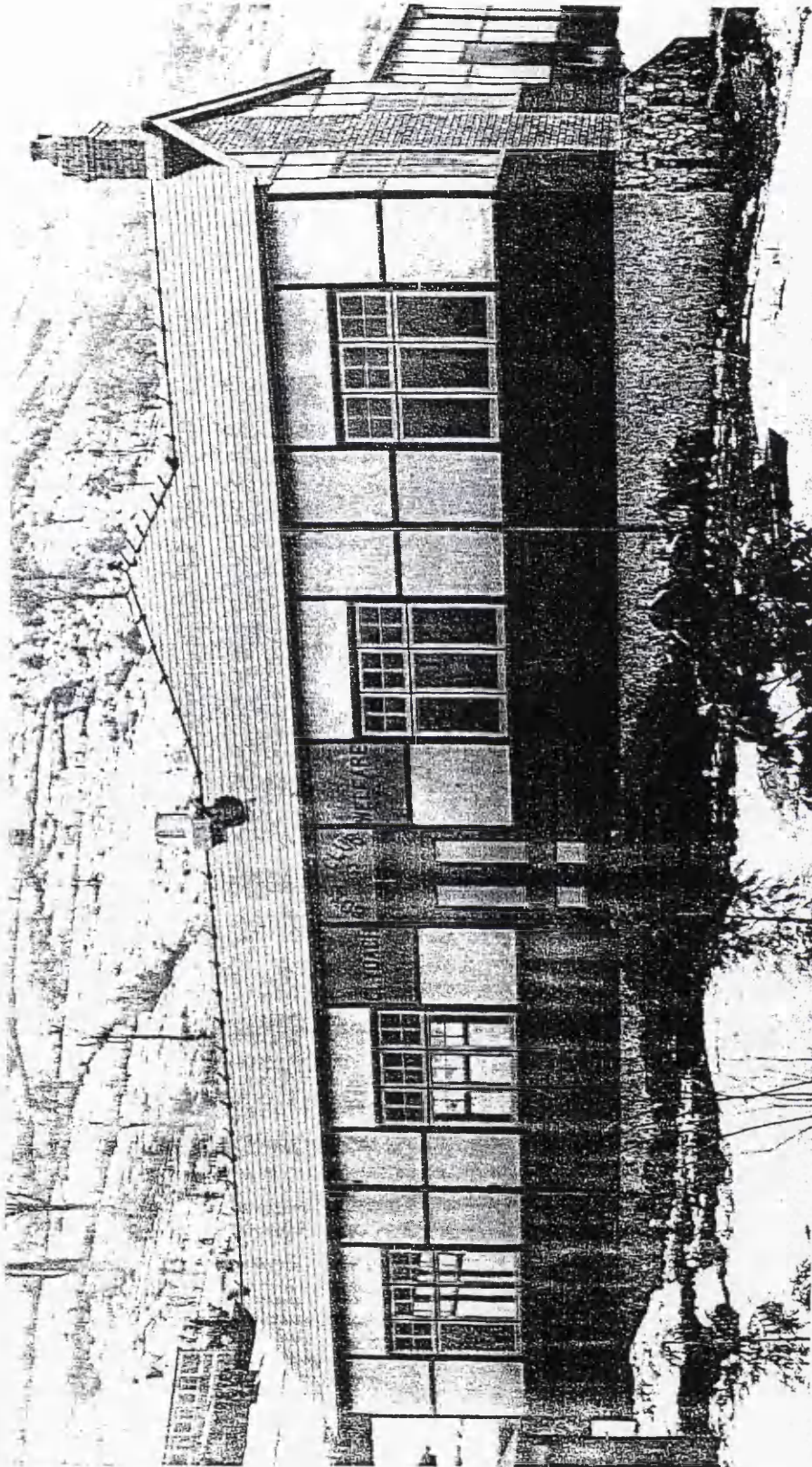
The Chief Constable of Cardiff, Mr James A. Wilson, had already aired a similar view in the previous year, 1933.

According to Chief Constable Wilson, however, leniency and attempts at reform were fine up to a certain point, after which sterner measures would only suffice. As he declared:

There is a natural hesitation to be critical of those who undertake the difficult task of eradicating from the youthful and mature minds the instinct to steal...Youth today is not impressed by the importance of the law. It is believed he holds it in contempt..The police do not believe in stern measures with youthful offenders, but there is a stage in the career of a youthful offender when the law should be applied with unmistakable firmness, and that is when the offender, by the evidence disclosed to the Court, shows that he has on more than one occasion displayed traits of character which must be repressed.[48]

If the Chief Constables of Cardiff and Swansea differed somewhat in their opinions, then, it was perhaps in relation to the recidivist - the persistent, repeat offender.

In the first half of the 1930's, Chief Constable May was a fervent advocate of reform and rehabilitation. With his strong Christian beliefs, he firmly emphasised the preventative as opposed to the curative. In this pursuit, the Chief Constable praised the work of welfare organisations throughout South Wales and the expansion of the Boys Club organisation. It was in these areas, he argued, that crime prevention originated. With regard to the Boys Club movement, his enthusiasm was overwhelming because it was based on 'Christian principles' and was energized by a 'strong, practical element which encouraged membership'. Chief Constable May argued that as a consequence of the movement, 'young unemployed fellows', as he called them, would learn to value themselves and fulfil 'real ambitions', adding that the Victoria Street Club with its 160 members had been a tremendous success. Meanwhile, the Strand Christian Mission also won the praise of the Chief Constable for establishing centres at Worcester Place and Wind Street. These smaller centres, which housed gymnasiums, libraries and billiard tables, were also hailed to be one of the first crime prevention strategies in the city. The aim, according to Chief Constable May, was to shift the emphasis away from



The Boys Club at Clydach: an early form of crime prevention for youths

the boredom of enforced idleness and petty crime. It came of little surprise, then, that in 1934 May affirmed with a measure of pride that Swansea had witnessed a marked decrease in 'serious' offences since 1932.[49] However, certain other sources suggest that the decline in serious crime was a trend throughout the inter-war years. The real problem seemed to concern crimes often of a petty nature such as larceny and theft which are discussed below.[50]

In spite of Chief Constable May's progressive views on the youth crime problem, criticism by some newspaper editors was swift and to the point. For example, to the editor of the **Herald of Wales**, the lenient approach to young, unemployed criminals was useless. Following a statement in 1935 by the chief constables of Cardiff, Swansea and Neath, expressing regret at the general increase of crime amongst young adults in South Wales, the editor declared:

It is not a matter of unemployment at all, for a great number of offenders are under school-leaving age. The amount of petty misdemeanours raises the question whether judicial methods are not faulty.

For the editor, then, the 'soft' approach of 'binding over' was merely 'a licence to commit similar offences and flatter the vanity of criminals'.[51] However, such harsh and un pitying comments were not unusual amongst certain editors in South Wales at this time. In October 1931, for example, the editor of the **South Wales Daily Post** held nothing back when he maintained that young and adult males should receive no benefits whatsoever, by asserting that there was 'not a stroke of work doing for all this free subsistence'.[52]

Overall, it seemed that the measures put in place to deal with the enforced idleness of the young unemployed received a broad seal of approval in South Wales. For instance, the Mayor of Swansea, encouraged by the opening of the Unemployed Centre at Morryston, bestowed a high degree of praise on the unemployed for seizing the initiative and contributing wholeheartedly to the building of the Centre itself.[53] The Secretary of the Swansea Christian Social Council, Mr Brin Thomas, also spoke with a measure of relief when he said that

finally, 'something was really being done'. He realised:

What difficulties there were in finding jobs for youths, and the problem was to keep young fellows out of mischief. If young men were put on the right road, the policeman's job was made easier.

Such measures also quelled the concerns identified in the first report of the Pilgrim Trust, which asserted that 'good material is running to waste' due to the absence of 'useful occupation'. It was, insisted the report, simply unacceptable that:

...in the valleys of the South Wales Coalfield there are thousands of boys living in idleness, not knowing how to get through the long day and falling into mischief from boredom.[54]

Furthermore, at the 1935 Annual Meeting of the Boys Club, the Chief Constable of Neath, Percy Keep, held that the Boys Club had benefited the townspeople and the Vale of Neath enormously by restraining the criminal instincts of the younger generation. Notwithstanding a degree of optimism, the chief constable did have some reservations: he was particularly critical of the apathetic contributions of the community towards the maintenance of the movement following his request for an additional contribution of £200 a year.

[55] Additionally, in an article printed in the **Herald of Wales** entitled 'Neath Police Chief Criticises Churches', Chief Constable Keep was also critical of the Churches in Wales who, he insisted, 'had turned a deaf ear' to the Club organisation; the members of which would otherwise 'be roving the streets and getting into trouble'. [56] However, his misgivings about the role of the clergy in the midst of mass unemployment were not that isolated or inconspicuous. His disparagement, of what can best be described as the moral disposition of the churches, chapels and their leaders, was, in effect, another noticeable aspect of the debate in the inter-war years.

Religious Opinion

In the early 1930's, the plight of the unemployed attracted a wide audience of opinion. According to George Lansbury, MP, this was not surprising given that the condition of the mass of unemployed workers was reaching crisis point. As he commented in the House of Commons:

Everybody here knows, and nobody here can contradict it, that these terrible, degrading, demoralising conditions, forced upon masses of people, are calling forth protests from nearly all the organised clergy throughout the country. I believe there is not a ruridecanal conference in an industrial area that has not put on record its opinion that the unemployed are being crushed both in body and soul by the conditions under which they are living.[57]

Specifically in South Wales, however, the debate on unemployment and its negative repercussions became a divisive issue for the leaders of organised religion. In the columns of newspapers, church leaders and religious commentators reached something of an impasse; their opinions oscillating from one extreme to another and giving rise to a significant literary debate which paralleled the disputations of those involved in keeping law and order. With that in mind, an observation based on press commentary reveals that the churches and chapels in Wales appeared unsure of how to approach unemployment and the social problems that fell in its wake. In general, the response was mixed and consequently led to church leaders being criticised and, perhaps more significantly, becoming critical of each other as a body. Perhaps the most salient feature was the acknowledgment by the clergy that unemployment had serious repercussions for communities. Whilst in some reports the inference of delinquency and misdemeanour as a consequence of unemployment was subtle, in others the distinctions were fairly clear and gave rise to considerable concern amongst prominent religious figures. Nevertheless, it also seems that the motives of the clergy were partially underpinned by the pressure exerted by those who were under no illusions as to why the effects of unemployment, particularly amongst

juveniles, needed to be tempered. As the Chief Constable of Llanelli commented in 1934:

One is tempted to ask whether it is too much for persons connected with religious and other kindred organisations to take these youngsters in hand. This will form an effective solution to juveniles who are a nuisance to the community.[58]

From the mid 1920's through to the mid 1930's, the churches in South Wales, as indeed elsewhere it seems, appeared to have been thrown into something of a panic as a consequence of the depression. In the newspapers, the debate illustrated and reflected the opinions of the clergy and its members who, at least in the Valleys according to **The Times**, were still regarded as being 'deeply religious' in spite of the problem of unemployment.[59] According to Rev. Tubb of Risca, this was certainly true when he noted in the 'letters to the editor' section of **The Times** that many of his unemployed congregation remained regular churchgoers, would 'do anything to get a job' and resented nothing more than the humiliating experience of unemployment.[60] Table 3.3 illustrates how church/chapel membership in the Rhondda was, in fact, a priority equal to trade union membership.

Table 3.3

Unemployed Membership of Institutions and Associations in Sample Towns

	Members of Church or Chapel	Trade Union	Unemployed Clubs	Workmen's Club or Institute	Not Connected To Anything	Other
Rhondda	70%	72%	35%	35%	37%	35%
Crook	25%	28%	48%	16%	12%	-
Liverpool	57%	12%	5%	6%	109%	29%

A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust, **Men Without Work**, London: Cambridge University Press, 1938, p.274.

In spite of the above findings, a report from Llanelli in 1931 suggested that church membership, which had traditionally been strong, was now at the mercy of the 'bleak

future' faced by the population of South Wales. Meanwhile, it was also feared that unemployment had initiated declining membership, a worrying 'rise in paganism' and 'a drift in church politics away from principles'.[61] However, some ministers took a longer view of things and intimated that perhaps it was all a matter of context and perspective. In the **Western Mail**, for instance, Rev. Charles Williams declared:

The religion of every period is powerfully influenced by the time spirit....the chief characteristic of the spirit of our day is universal depression and uncertainty. We are a nation in a wilderness.[62]

Dr Mander, of Mt. Pleasant Baptist church, Swansea, was of the same accord when he commented that perhaps it was indeed a matter of perspective. In the **Herald of Wales** in 1931, Dr Mander suggested that the concerns and fears of ministers confronting the unemployment problem were transient. The church, he claimed, had 'marked time' before and 'there was no need for the church to take such a depressing view of things'.[63] Some years later, in 1934, Dr William Mathews commented in **Ecclesiastical News** that too many church people were 'blind to the present crisis of our nation'. In his position as Dean, Dr Mathews claimed that people were generally wondering whether religion in such difficult times had anything to offer them - particularly the younger generation - when he insisted that 'there is a mighty struggle going on for the soul of the nation'.[64] However, perhaps the most telling comment was made by the social investigator, John Miller, who stated that the churches were quite simply out of touch with modern times and had 'lost the respect of their communities'.[65]

In the midst of the depression, the 'fight for the soul of the nation' was a noticeable theme which some church leaders adopted to tackle the response to unemployment. According to the Minister of St. Helens Congregational Church in Swansea, Elwyn Daniel Hughes, the misdemeanours of the unemployed - especially the younger element - were understandable and obvious in the present circumstances. In

South Wales, where the young unemployed were basically resilient, he claimed, many had become wayward because they had grown 'impatient with organised religion'. The depression, he argued, had created a mass of social contradictions and problems which meant that people had become 'straight God-ward, but crooked man-ward'. [66] However, some ministers took a different view, believing that the church now had an opportunity to face up to these problems. In the **Cardiff Times** of 1932, for instance, Rev. Samuels felt compelled to launch the 'Crusaders of Christ' campaign. On the whole, claimed Samuels, this was an attempt to make Christianity more pertinent to what he termed the 'modern problems of unemployment, poverty and crime'. In his view, the campaign needed to 'put into practical effect' the ideals of Christianity within the context of the problems associated with the younger generation. And, in his efforts, he publicly appealed to other religious leaders and the business community for assistance, which he subsequently claimed had been met with 'warm approval'. [67]

At a meeting of Free Church Ministers in Cardiff, Rev. Malcolm Spencer urged that the churches had a duty to help the unemployed by occupying the hours that they spent in idle wastefulness. As he put it:

The churches should cooperate by throwing open their premises to the unemployed for fellowship, recreation and education.

His argument was based on the conviction that if the unemployed were encouraged to understand their predicament, then they would be better equipped at coming to terms with the social problems that unemployment created. [68] Almost consequentially, throughout South Wales efforts were made in the first half of the 1930's to help the unemployed in this way and, it seems, with a degree of success. As one minister reported in the **Western Mail**:

I am glad to report that ministers of influential churches are already helping churches whose members are unemployed. The Reverend Wynn Owen of Caerphilly, has, with very happy results, undertaken the charge of

Senghenydd, while the Reverend John Williams, of Ferndale, is practically the Baptist pastor of the whole of the Rhondda Fach.[69]

However, to the Rev. W.T. Whitley, these measures were useless and only achieved to flatter the innate laziness of the majority of the unemployed. In the **Western Mail**, Rev. Whitley was reported to have commented to the Baptist Missionary Society that the unemployed were simply too indolent about their predicament. Laziness, he asserted, was at the core of the unemployment problem because 'nine out of ten are too lazy to find work'. Furthermore, he claimed that the adult unemployed were simply beyond hope and the only way left for the church to respond to this 'work-shy attitude' in society was for church leaders to turn their attention to the young. Here, he confidently claimed, there was 'some hope' for the future unemployed.[70]

Whilst some churches threw open their doors and provided musical entertainment, others offered refuge and a place for social gathering during the daytime. To the editor of the **South Wales Daily Post**, these endeavours, which he saw as the duty of the church, were commendable and he particularly praised the successful organ recitals provided at the Parish Church, Swansea. Mindful of the increase in the crime figures for that year, the editor put it this way:

We will content ourselves with a much simpler position - a commendation of the efforts now being made in Swansea to meet in some respects the needs of men who are workless, and feel immensely the corrupting boredom of the loitering hours.[71]

Similar sentiments resounded in the **Herald of Wales** in 1934, when Councillor Daniel Roberts, JP, asserted: 'Great work had been done for the unemployed'. Also, in Llanelli, the Mayor of the town was inspired to comment:

I have been very impressed by the class of entertainment they have provided free of charge for the unemployed.
[72]

To some religious leaders, the interventionist position adopted by certain churches and chapels into economic, political and social life was not to be welcomed. For instance, Dr Inge of St. Paul's Cathedral warned in **The Times** that society's problems as a consequence of unemployment could only be alleviated by what he termed 'Other Worldliness'. The clergy, he argued, should not get involved in the social, economic and political debate because it conflicted with the ideology of the Christian faith. He stressed that if religion and Christianity continued to intervene in the way that it had, then the Church as an institution was in danger of becoming 'a sloppy kind of Socialism which always came out smirched'. Still further, he concluded:

If we wanted to make humanity better we must take our foundation somewhere beyond this changing world.[73]

In South Wales, the editor of the **South Wales Daily Post** had already expressed a similar view in 1931. Although he was in favour of the help offered to the unemployed by certain churches in South Wales, he acknowledged the limits of these efforts. As he put it:

Cure of the economic situation is beyond the hope of the churches. It is subject to immediate laws which they cannot affect.[74]

Whilst the above comments tended to explain, or explain away, the limits of church and chapel responsibility toward the unemployed, such posturing was for some leaders of organised religion clearly wrong. For instance, as Rev. Arthur Dakin commented in May 1933:

No half-hearted christianity was any good today, for the present situation was too desperate....We are not christians. We may say our prayers here, but at the same time we manufacture poison gas.[75]

Also, in the **South Wales Evening Post**, Canon William Havard's address to Swansea Rotary Club was reported in an article entitled 'Social Work Among the Unemployed'. In the main, he

acknowledged the good work of the five unemployed centres in the town, but continued to express his concern about the 18 - 25-year-olds who had never known the discipline of work. For this age group, his feelings were quite salient when he announced:

Something had to be doneAre we simply going to allow them to become the flotsam and jetsam of a world that does not want them. Nothing is more demoralising than to find that the country in which one was born does not need one's services.

However, Canon Havard was also concerned about the general lack of order in South Wales' society, which he unremittingly attributed to the incidence of unemployment. He argued that the social problems that went hand in hand with unemployment would only be alleviated when industry revived. Only then, he added, would Swansea cease to be what it had in recent years become, 'two cities - one for the rich and one for the poor'. As he put it:

The condition of the unemployed called for the sympathy and goodwill of people more fortunately situated to enable them to keep their manhood in times of distress...There is poverty of the direst kind in Swansea, and only those who actually came into contact with these poor people realised the extent of their poverty. The majority of the unemployed would wish for nothing better than work. It was not fair for people to charge the unemployed with being work-shy.[76]

In December 1931, Canon Peter Green commented in the **Police Review** that the increased lawlessness initiated by the depression was like a disease in society. Like any disease, he argued, it should be treated, but it would not be an easy fight because crime was now 'the cancer in our social life'. [77] In complete agreement was Principal Thomas Phillips. In the **Western Mail** of 1933, Principal Phillips asserted at some length that unemployment underpinned many of the social problems in South Wales. He stated that because of its social consequences, unemployment itself was a tragic vice which should be categorised along with many other offences such as gambling, intemperance and other

misdemeanours. Across South Wales, he added, unemployment had destroyed communities and their inhabitants; it had changed moral attitudes; it had divided the church. His words, which are an apposite conclusion to the church debate, are an illustration of how serious the debate had become in the inter-war years. He concluded thus:

I cannot escape from the unemployment feeling more than I could escape from the war feeling fifteen years ago. I travel down the Valleys at night and see as beautiful a sight as eyes can meet - the homes on the hillside lit up into clusters and loops of miniature stars; and then comes the stabbing thought that these happy homes are overtaken by a blight which they could not evade. None of us can escape the human tragedy of unemployment. A few months ago I was preaching at Abergwnfi, a place where four out of the five collieries are stopped. At the close of the morning worship the young people gathered round me and asked me to preach at night on the problems of the unemployed. Their story was of young people who had never worked and whose creed was likely to be, 'God does not care for us and there is nothing left to care for'. The linch-pin had slipped out of life. It did not matter what they did or what came of their existence.....but if the unemployed are largely outside the churches in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport, they constitute a large proportion of their membership up the Valleys. Here the way the churches can help is through being churches in the true sense of the word - feeding faith, showing sympathy, impartial encouragement - true human catholic churches. The denominations ought to keep the home fires burning in the Valleys and maintain strong churches in precisely the districts where it is difficult to do so....churches which fight one another had better be both sunk into a disused mine where they cannot engender the Cain spirit.[78]

'Typical' Offences and the Pattern of Crime

In the inter-war years, the debate on crime and unemployment was reinforced by references into the nature and character of lawlessness. Consequently, a number of interesting observations emerge from the sources of the day, indicating that the experience of unemployment initiated a particular pattern of criminal behaviour. For instance, in an investigation into crime and unemployment by Dorothy Thomas in 1927, a pioneering work which was acknowledged by S.K.

Graph 3.4

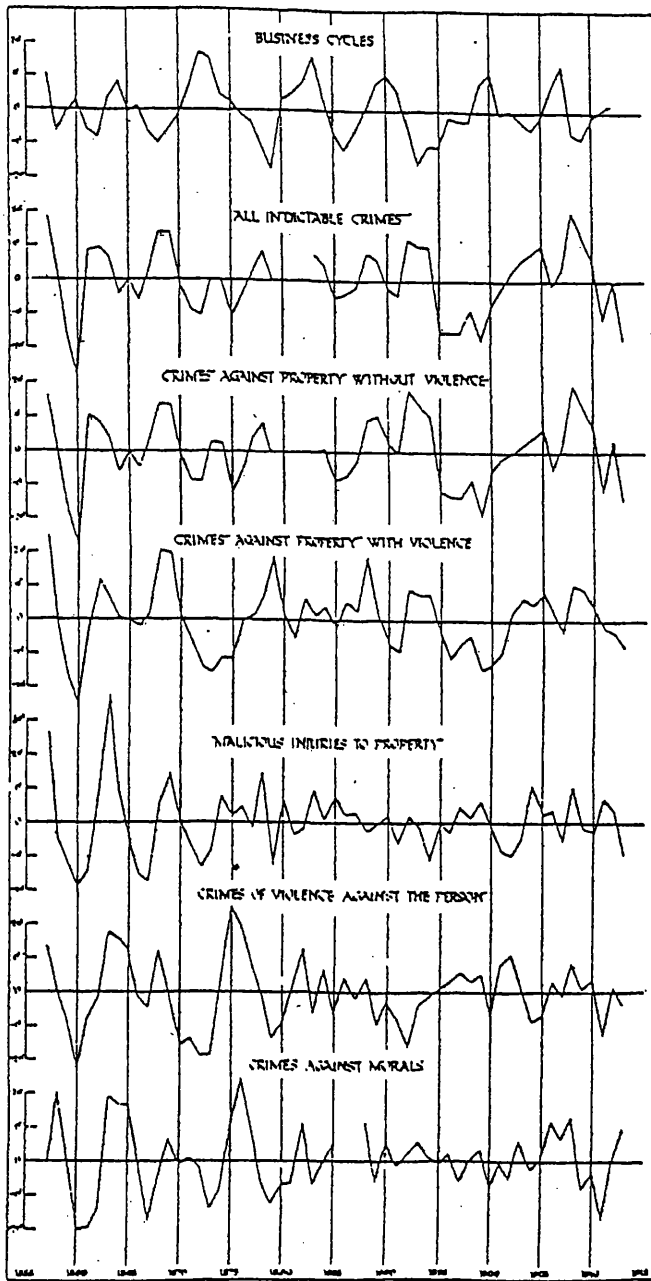


CHART VII.

Ruck as 'influential', the pattern of criminal behaviour was found to be dictated largely by economic conditions. From her findings, Thomas admitted that crime was, as she put it, 'the most complex of social phenomena' which, more than anything else, emphasised the need for greater economic stability in society.[79] With this in mind, Thomas found that in spite of other explanations of criminality, ie. in-born theory, lawlessness as a consequence of economic depression and unemployment was closely inter-related. Her graph (Graph 3.4), which shows the constancy of various coefficients, indicated that a very real relationship existed between certain classes of crime, economic depression and a downturn in the business cycle. As she concluded:

Crime generally, and larcenies, show a slight tendency to increase in times of depression, and decrease in prosperity. Burglary, housebreaking, and other violent crimes against property show a much stronger tendency in the same direction.[80]

Essentially, what Thomas had noted from previous years of economic depression was that the pattern and nature of criminal behaviour tended to alter during times of hardship. Further still, she argued that this pattern showed no sign of altering in the period after the war and up until 1927 when her findings were published.[81]

In the inter-war years, the pattern of crime disclosed that theft, petty theft, certain offences against the person, such as larceny, and property crimes in general, increased markedly during the depression years. What this signified was that the pattern of offending had altered to the extent that these offences had become more common. The problem for economic and social historians, however, was to try and associate this change with particular phenomena, ie. downturns in the business cycle, economic depression, unemployment, etc. For this reason alone, literary sources have been essential. In Wales, historians such as Chris Williams have found this connection relatively easy to make by commenting:

One final indicator of social tension that may have been

generated by unemployment and poverty is that of criminal activity. The inter-war years were a period of high levels of indictable crime in the coalfield, but this largely took the form of looting from coal trucks, the burglary of stores and offices, shoplifting, and the vandalising of churches and chapels...Much of this activity had economic need at its root, but it was the colliery companies, the railway companies, merchants, shopkeepers and publicans who were the usual victims. Interpersonal theft and violence did occur but, in the main, rates of crime, as with the rates of disease, reflected a sense of external alienation.[82]

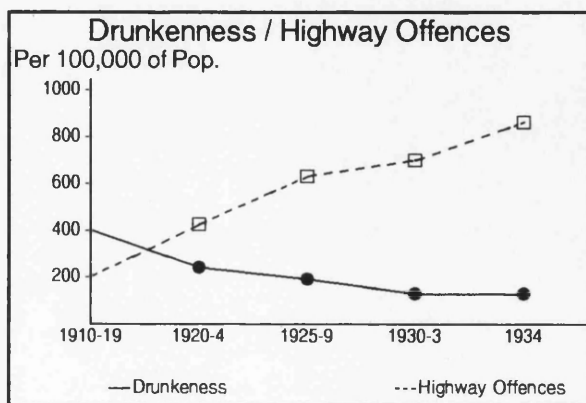
Nevertheless as hinted earlier and worthy of elaboration here, was the fact that certain categories of offence were significantly in decline. An authority on property crime and burglary in the 1920's put it this way:

Crimes of violence are definitely on the decrease; but the crime of the embezzler, swindler, and larcenist are on the increase.[83]

It would seem, therefore, that as serious violence declined, public behaviour improved, with proceedings for certain offences such as drunkenness and prostitution showing lower year-on-year annual returns. For instance, in the period 1923 to 1929, proceedings for prostitution in Swansea declined from a total of 48 to 17. Drunkenness, also showed a marked decline with 453 proceeded against at Swansea Assizes in 1923, compared to 154 in 1931.[84] For England and Wales, the pattern was similar :

Graph 3.5

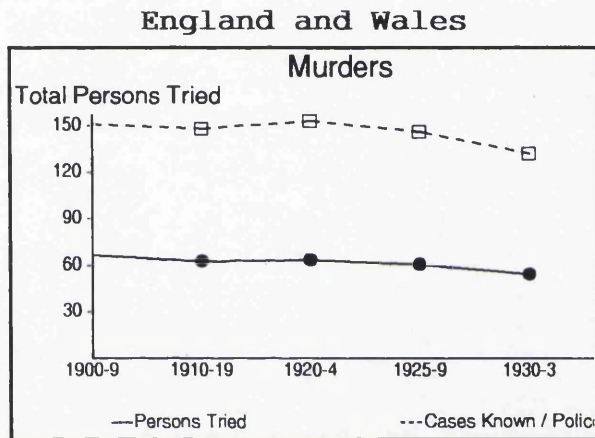
ENGLAND and WALES



A.M. Carr-Saunders & Caradog Jones, D., **A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales**, 2nd Edition, London: Oxford University Press, 1937, p.192.

References from the inter and post-war years suggest that murder and violent crime remained fairly low and declined steadily up to 1933. In Swansea, for example, three murders and one attempted murder were recorded in the annual return for 1928. Again, this level of offending was not enough to cause the chief constable any concern, in spite of the inevitable publicity that such cases aroused in the press.[85] The pattern for murder in England and Wales can be seen in Graph 3.6 :

Graph 3.6



A.M. Carr-Saunders & D. Caradog Jones, *ibid*, p.190.

The crimes that increased significantly in the 1920's and early 1930's related mainly to property offences. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was the offences against property which appeared to cause the greatest alarm to those involved in the everyday business of the Courts. Under the heading, 'The Epidemic of Crime', in the **Police Review** of 1931, for instance, Mr Justice McCardie was quite clear in this respect when he stated:

There has not been much increase in crimes of violence, though armed criminals are becoming more numerous. There has been a deplorable increase in housebreaking, shopbreaking, larceny, false pretences, blackmail, and above all, cases of fraud.[86]

However, some of the typical and 'deplorable' offences against property included thefts from houses and shops; the theft of motor cars for a quick getaway and items from within



them; the theft of food and clothing as discussed in Chapter Two; and, coal.[87] The extract overleaf (Charts 3.1 and 3.2), which is reproduced from the figures of the last Quarterly Report of the Chief Constable of Llanelli for 1934, gives some indication of the pattern, nature and proportion of property offences.

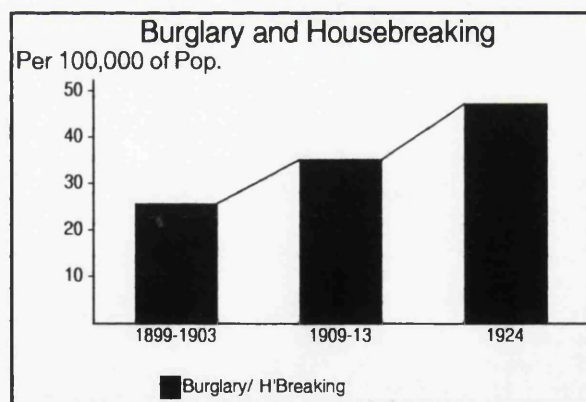
According to Edward Grout, the increase in crimes against property was the main feature of the crime pattern up until the mid 1920's. As he put it:

This upward tendency in crime has been noticeable for several years. It is almost confined to crimes of dishonesty. The proportion per 100,000 of the population of crimes of burglary and housebreaking was 25.43 during 1899-1903; 34.91 in 1909-13, and 46.82 in 1924.[88]

In the space of twenty-five years, Grout concluded, crimes such as burglary and housebreaking had almost doubled, as illustrated in Graph 3.7:

Graph 3.7

England and Wales

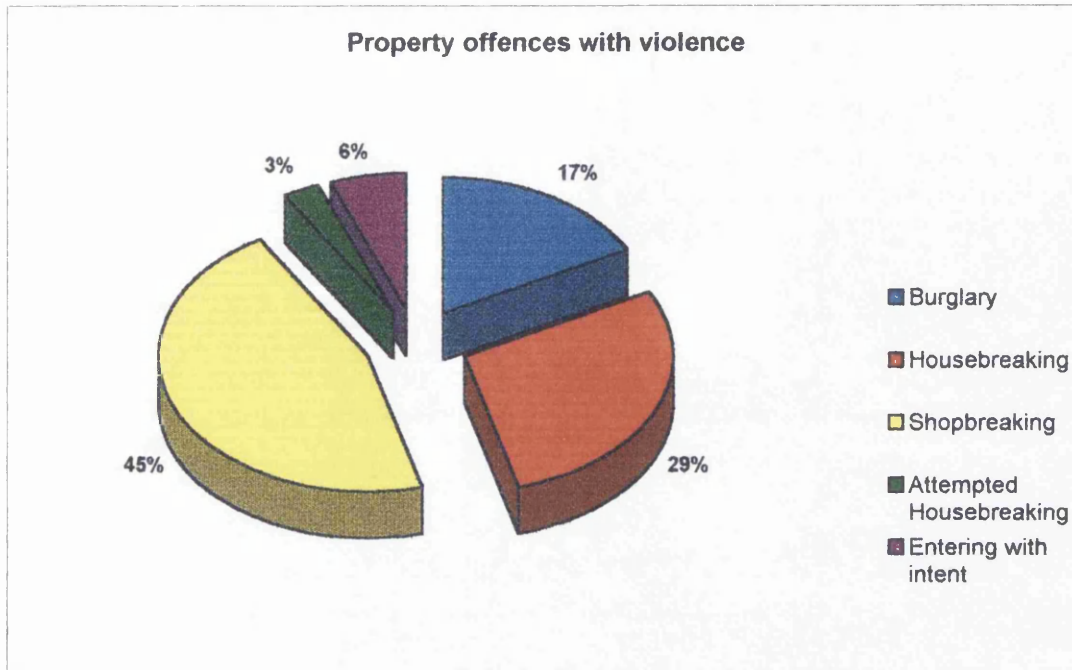


Edward H. Grout, **Burglary Risks**, London: Pitman & Son, 1927, p.32.

Furthermore, Grout was also in agreement with Sir Leonard Dunning, His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, who noticed that much of the offending concerned the poor who were turning on themselves and their communities; the nature of which we return to later on.[89]

Chart 3.1

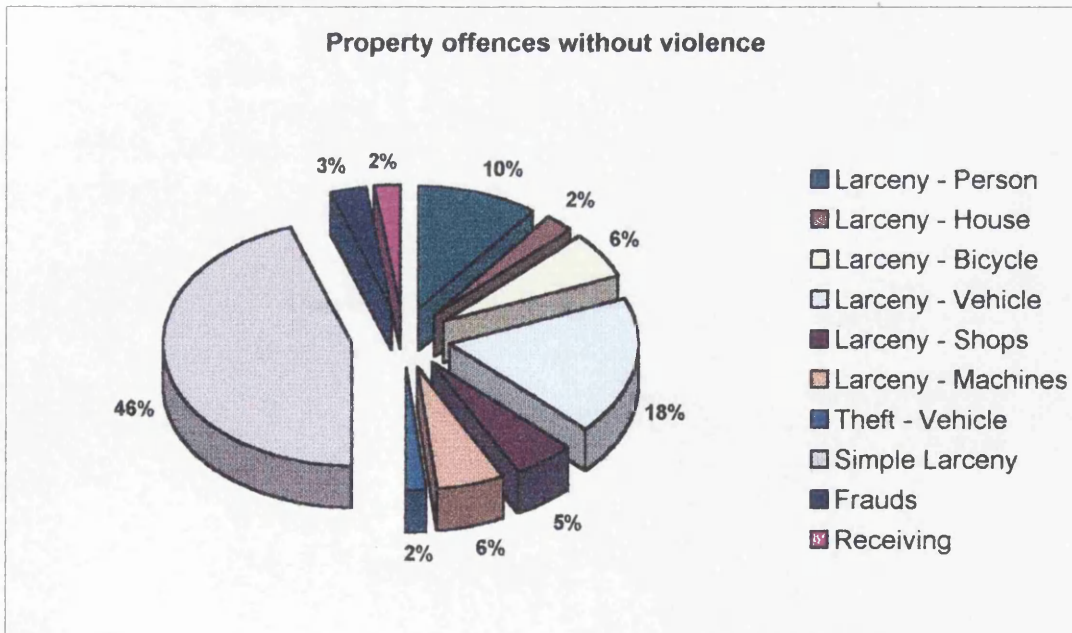
Llanelli/Carmarthen



Carmarthen Borough Police, **Chief Constable Report and Minutes**
(Standing Joint Committee) Carmarthen: CBP Oct. – Dec., 1934, p24

Chart 3.2

Llanelli/Carmarthen



Carmarthen Borough Police, *ibid.*, p.25

Also, whilst the 'Dark Figure' of crime was thought to be considerable in this respect, offences against property were seen to increase during periods of particularly high unemployment.[90] Coincidentally or not at these times, too, in the industrial communities of South Wales (although less publicised) it was also discovered that the unemployed and juveniles were openly robbing money and goods from women and children.[91]

It was the decrease in crimes of violence and the increase in crimes of an economic nature such as larceny, that led Carr-Saunders and Caradog Jones to comment that what now existed was 'an alarming state of affairs which demands further analysis'.[92] Moreover, the change of attitude, as well as in the pattern of crime, was enough to convince them that crime had a social basis. There was, they intimated, a coincidence between certain offences and the worst years of the depression. For the period 1925 - 1934, they put their findings thus:

The course of events took an unfavourable turn....While those crimes which arise from failure to keep violent emotions in check are decreasing, the crimes which imply forethought and in many cases the misapplication of skill are on the increase.

In this respect, they cited the fact that crimes such as fraud, false pretences and property crimes such as breaking and entering, had 'become much more common'. In the period 1914 - 34, for instance, the offence of breaking and entering had increased by 36 per cent, they claimed. To Carr-Saunders and Caradog Jones, the increase in crimes against property such as this was a clear manifestation that crime had its roots in the social sphere. As they put it: "Crime is evidence of social failure." [93] Furthermore, the findings of Carr-Saunders and Jones were reiterated to a certain extent in 1935 by Jerome Hall. Essentially, Hall discovered that the depression in both Britain and America after 1929 affected theft, in particular, in two ways: firstly, he found that the number of large scale thefts tended to decrease; whilst secondly, petty theft tended to increase

sharply. This pattern led him to conclude:

The explanation generally given to account for the changes noted above is that the depression limited the market for stolen property with the result that large scale thefts committed for the purpose of sale decreased whereas unemployment and poverty increased the number of thefts committed to secure goods for consumption. This is impossible to demonstrate but it represents the views of experienced observers and is supported by reasonably reliable data.[94]

In South Wales, the Annual Reports of the chief constables indicated that the pattern of crime reflected an overwhelming concern in relation to larceny and simple larceny. In 1928, for instance, the chief constable report for Swansea showed that out of 1,113 indictable offences committed in the town, 882 were of simple larceny. By 1931, the ratio was almost exactly the same with offences against property constituting the majority of crimes committed. Also, in 1931 Chief Constable Frank May stated in his Annual Report that a considerable number of these offences involved thefts from commercial travellers. He noted that their vehicles were being constantly targeted by thieves who, as we have already seen, he believed were probably young, unemployed males.[95] This assertion, however, particularly in relation to motor-vehicles, was reiterated by other commentators. Edward Grout, for instance, believed that motor-vehicles had become an important part of the crime pattern in the 1920's. As he put it:

Motor-vehicles not only afford the criminal speedy means of escape, but are themselves frequently the subject of theft.[96]

Also according to Hall, those responsible for thefts of and from motor-vehicles in both Britain and America were youngsters who were economically and socially deprived. For many of the younger element, motor-vehicles became an obsession and a focus of attention, he argued. In relation to the problem of motor-car theft in urban areas, he

stressed:

Youth with its desire to ride in an automobile is the constant and the most important single factor....Illegal taking of automobiles by boys is so common in the large cities that it has become part of the typical pattern of delinquent behaviour. 'Joy-ride' expresses the attitude of the young, especially those who feel deprived of a common pleasure.[97]

Nevertheless, in spite of the above, the relatively new car-crime phenomenon raised sufficient concern for the Chief Constable of Swansea to urge motorists to be more prudent and wary in respect of their vehicles. In 1931, his advice to all motorists - which could have easily referred to the present-day problem - was to lock valuables out of sight and to make sure that vehicles were secured at night. As he put it:

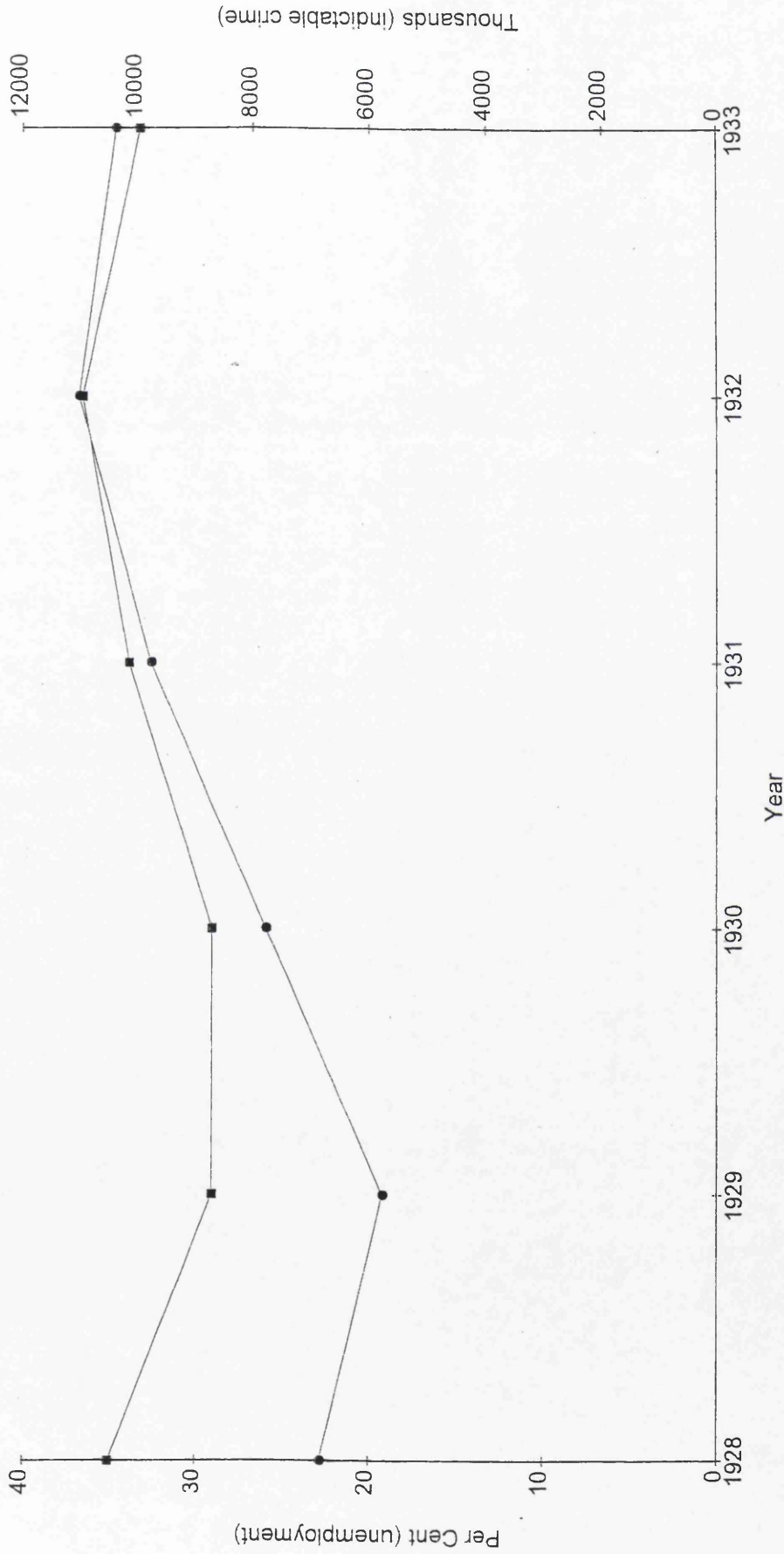
...a considerable number of cases of larceny have been due to commercial travellers and other members of the motoring public leaving articles of value in their cars unattended, and I take this opportunity of appealing to motorists to use, as far as possible, authorised parking places where an attendant is in charge...this course is strongly advised when articles of value are left in cars in parking places or the streets, if only for a few minutes.[98]

Furthermore, it is worth noting that motor-vehicles were not only a target for thieves, they also played an important part in what was described in Parliamentary Debates as the new problem of 'smash and grab' raiding. In 1931, for instance, Sir Herbert Samuel pointed out in the House of Commons that 'smash and grab' raiding was a worrying trend. It had, he insisted, become the 'new crime fashion' which had increased threefold in less than a decade.[99] In **The Times** it was also noted that motor-vehicles were increasingly used to assist property offenders in their task of removing goods from the scene of a crime. In 1934, for example, a report declared that motor-cars had increased the value of goods stolen by as much as £5,000 in some cases. For some criminals, therefore, motor-vehicles had clearly become a new and important 'tool of the trade'. [100] However, clearly

Graph 3.8

Unemployment and Crime

Wales



Government Statistical Service: Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics, Vols. 1 & 2, Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1985, pp. 142-5, 164. *[Male & Female]

mindful of the need to deter this particular trend in South Wales, Chairman of the Bench, Mr Hopkin Morgan, CBE, commented in the **Herald of Wales** in 1931 that 'all offences of any nature involving motor-vehicles would be severley punished'. Consequently, in the relatively minor trial of one unemployed man, and under the heading 'Neath Defendant's Joy-Ride', Mr Hopkin Morgan was true to his word and levied a substantial £15.00 fine 'as a deterrent', adding, 'we trust that it will be the means of preventing this thing which appears to overwhelm'.[101]

Graph 3.8, above, is inclusive of most types of property offences such as those outlined above. Indictable offences brought before the Courts of South Wales are included, as are the numbers of those actually convicted for crimes against property. In both instances, the unemployment figures and the official figures for criminal offences show a close correlation.

A variety of inter-war sources reflected both the comments of chief constables as well as the fluctuations of the statistical map. For instance, in the writings of commentators such as E. Wight-Bakke, crime in Wales became an issue amongst the unusually low paid workers as well as the unemployed. To illustrate his point, Bakke provided a number of examples from his own research which led him to assert:

Failure to find some means of honest livelihood was making dishonest means seem more attractive....A dock labourer, well past middle age, quoted with apparent approval the words of a young man who roomed with him, who had been out of work for a long period: 'So he said to me, he says, 'Dont you worry about your money. I'm trying to get work. But you'll not lose any money. I'll get it by fair means if I can, but if I can't...' Well, you can see what he meant. He was getting desperate.[102]

Further interview transcripts provided by Bakke show a similar tendency to crime, as one interviewee recalled:

I know a fellow who went into a house that was closed up. He didn't take anything but bread, and he had a good sleep in the bed while the folks was away on holiday. He got sent away for that. Then there was another chap up

our way who stole a milk bottle from a doorstep for his baby. You can't blame folks for that sort of thing, can you ?[103]

In the newspapers of South Wales, the debate on the incidence of crime as a consequence of unemployment could not have been clearer, with the printed sources revealing that unemployment had a bearing on certain types of offending which tended to increase and become more popular as a result. However, the anomaly, both at the time and retrospectively, would be to suggest that the unemployed were solely responsible for this increase. In fact, the newspaper sources show that those in employment were, at least on some occasions, also prone to pilfering, especially from the workplace.[104] In some cases, this may well have been nothing more than a reflection of low or poor wages as an inducement to commit crime which, as Bakke also found, was not that different from the poverty of unemployment.[105] Nevertheless, in the newspapers of South Wales, the offences which predominated were those that emphasised poverty and destitution. As intimated earlier and further elaborated below, press coverage brought to public attention the realities of coal-stealing, shop-breaking, house-breaking (including thefts from gardens and sheds), burglary, fowl-stealing and motor-vehicle crime. And, as far as items on the property offence list are concerned, many of the articles stolen were of little value or of a petty nature, ie. the simple larceny of food, clothing and small amounts of money. A more accurate example of this can be seen in Table 3.4, (p.110, below) which is based on a random sample of the **Herald of Wales**, January 1931.

Overall, Table 3.4 illustrates that much of the offending tended to accentuate crimes of poverty as listed above. However, these misdemeanors were not entirely confined to the unemployed, with at least two offences of food/clothes stealing being committed by spelterworkers. It is also noticeable that those who were in employment and who committed petty offences were in low paid and low status jobs.[106] The Table further emphasises that all motor-related offences were committed by male youths under the age

of 25, and that all the coal stealing offences were committed by unemployed males. Overwhelmingly, the pattern of offending highlights crimes of larceny of some kind or another, with at least nine cases of breaking and entering.

As a window on criminal behaviour, Table 3.4 indicates a number of interesting features. Firstly, the average age of offending for those categorised as unemployed was 25. For those in employment, the average age was 33. To a degree, this may reflect the concerns towards youth unemployment and juvenile crime expressed by the chief constables of South Wales. Secondly, those in employment were punished more severely, with prison / borstal sentences and heavier fines being handed out generally. Out of eight prison sentences issued in the sample, seven were passed on employed persons. Moreover, whilst the majority of the unemployed were fined in shillings, those in employment were fined in £ sterling. A summation of sentencing, then, may reflect that judges and magistrates were aware of the acute problems of the unemployed and therefore took this into account when passing sentences. Thirdly, the ratio of male to female crime was 8:1, with 50 offences committed by males and 6 by women. This is very much in accord with the Annual Reports of chief constables. Finally, save for one case of infanticide, an offence which has traditionally been linked with poverty, the incidence of violence and violent offending was low. Again, this is in line with the findings of social investigators and the published statistics of the time. In general, it could be argued that based on the case sample, literary/printed evidence in newspapers was a fairly accurate reflection of the statistical map of the inter-war years.

Table 3.4

Crime Profile / Case Sample: Herald of Wales

Age	Sex	Employment	Offence	Sentence/Fine	Item / Value £
17	M	Labourer	B & E	12 Months	£ 3.17s
37	F	Unemployed	Receiving	Discharge	---
33	M	Steward	Theft	Discharge	< £1.00
18	M	Tinworker	B & E	Not Stated	£4.10s
22	M	Not Stated	S & R	12 Months	£8.00
50	M	Seaman	Theft	Not Stated	---
27	M	Unemployed	Theft	£1.7s	2s 6d
16	M	Unemployed	Theft	20 s	Motor car
16	M	Unemployed	Theft	20 s	Motor car
16	M	Unemployed	Theft	20 s	Motor car
---	M	Baker	Theft	£10.00	Food
28	M	Spelteman	Stealing	£10.00	---
38	M	Spelteman	Stealing	£10.00	---
49	M	Labourer	Receiving	---	---
38	M	Labourer	Stealing	4 Months	< £1.00
41	M	Labourer	Stealing	3 Months	< £1.00
26	M	Wheelwright	Stealing	1 Month	---
21	M	Unemployed	B & E	6 Months	Cash
16	M	Unemployed	B & E	Bound Over	Food
26	M	Unemployed	B & E	2 Years Probation	Clothes
25	M	Unemployed	Theft	£15.00	Motor car
18	M	Unemployed	Theft	£10.00	< £1.00
---	M	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	£2.00	7s 6d
---	M	Unemployed	Book-Keeping	10s	---
16	M	Unemployed	Wilful Damage	5s	£20.00
18	M	Unemployed	Wilful Damage	5s	£20.00
17	M	Labourer	Wilful Damage	5s	£20.00
39	M	Spelteman	B & E / S & R	6 Mths Hard Lab.	£7.00 / Clothes/Food
28	M	Spelteman	B & E / S & R	6 Mths Hard Lab.	£7.00 / Clothes/Food
---	M	Unemployed	Perjury	Bound Over	---
38	M	Labourer	Larceny	Bound Over	---
49	M	Labourer	Larceny	Bound Over	£33.00
---	F	Unemployed	Theft	40 s	< 50 s
---	M	Unemployed	Theft	40 s	< 50 s
30	M	Taxi Driver	S & R	£2.00	£5.00 Cash
45	M	Canvasser	S & R	£2.00	---
---	M	Ship Steward	Wounding	Psychiatric Treat.	---
26	M	Unemployed	B & E	Deferred	£22.30s
25	M	Tinworker	Stealing	£3.00	25 s
28	M	Labourer	G.B.H	Deferred	---
61	M	Unemployed	Theft	4 Mths	£32.00
---	M	Unemployed	Stealing	Case Dismissed	---
30	M	Unemployed	Intent	Case Dismissed	---
---	M	Unemployed	Stealing	5 s	Coal
---	M	Unemployed	Stealing	5 s	Coal
---	M	Unemployed	Stealing	5 s	Coal
---	F	---	Infanticide	Deferred	---
---	M	Unemployed	Stealing	£3.00	4s 6d Coal / Wood
---	M	---	Stealing	£3.00	4s 6d
---	F	Unemployed	Theft	20 s	£5.00
---	M	Collier	Theft	20 s	---
---	F	Unemployed	Threat. Behav.	10 s	---
---	M	Traveller	Theft	20 s	£20.00
16	M	Farm Lab.	Theft	3 years Borstal	4s 6d
---	M	Fireman	B & E	5s	---
31	F	Unemployed	Theft	£4.00	£3,19s

Herald of Wales, January 1931, Swansea Central Library.

B & E = Breaking & Entering
S & R = Stealing & Receiving

Not included in sample : drunkenness, food offences (ie. selling bad meat), road traffic accidents, bankruptcy and suicide.

One of the most common misdemeanours reported in the press was that of coal stealing. For the coal company owners, the police and magistrates it was clearly a more serious concern than nostalgia would have us believe. The reason for this according to historian, Chris Williams, was that coal stealing was so prolific, particularly around Merthyr Tydfil in the 1920's, where unemployed men and women 'regularly' raided the coal companies. As he put it:

Coal stealing accounted for half of all recorded indictable crime in Merthyr Tydfil in the 1920's, with young men and women the most regular culprits.[107]

As an issue of public concern, however, the offence of stealing coal was given a relatively low priority in terms of lengthy press commentary, but even here there were exceptions. For instance, in the **Caerphilly Journal** of 1928, 1929 and 1930, reports described how unemployed coal stealers from Senghennydd regularly and systematically raided the nearby Universal and Albion collieries. In one instance in 1930, a report described how men often came 'in crowds and tried to terrorise the people. It was not safe for anyone to say a word to them'.[108] On one particular occasion, the historian Michael Lieven described the scale of the problem at Universal Pit, Senghennydd:

At night, with their faces blackened, they systematically raided the colliery and locomotive yard. They removed the entire floor of the colliery engine house, and when one of them was caught he refused to name the remainder of the gang. Large quantities of fuel were involved: 23 hundred weight of timber blocks and 7 hundredweight of coal was found in the house and garden of one of the Hyatts whose family had been respected colliery officials, at the forefront of the colliery rescues and pillars of the sports teams and the chapel.[109]

According to Lieven, much of this was understandable in the face of unemployment and the 'desperation produced by destitution'. As he contended:

Relatively few found work [and] in the circumstances, it was increasingly difficult to maintain general norms against theft.[110]

Lieven also found that aside from the dire need to obtain fuel, coal stealing was popular amongst the younger generation; 'offering a sense of having some control over their lives and a satisfaction in reclaiming their own product'. [111]

As the evidence below tends to imply, the offence of coal-stealing was probably regarded by magistrates as something of a serious nuisance given the frequency and volume of similar cases coming before the Courts. As a misdemeanour, another feature of the phenomenon is that it was nearly always a seasonal problem, as reflected in the newspapers throughout the winter months. Furthermore, it was also quite apparent that it was usually associated with unemployed males normally under the age of 30. Rarely, it seems, did someone of employed status come before the Court for this particular offence. [112] This finding was also reiterated in a television documentary **Your Century**. However, according to one interviewee in the programme, Reginald Fine, coal-stealing in the depression was a 'serious, hazardous, yet necessary business', involving 'constant battles between the police - who didn't mess about if you were caught - and the unemployed'. As he recalled:

More often than not, but it didn't happen to me, there'd be a policeman standing at the top of the tip, and blokes would be pinching coal all over the place and what not. They'd be summonsed, summonsed for stealing what they thought was rightfully theirs - coal. [113]

However, also discernible is that when apprehended and brought before the magistrates, many perpetrators used unemployment as a plea for leniency. In spite of this, fines were usually the normal form of punishment and usually varied between 4s and a considerable £2 for persistent, repeat offenders. [114] In some instances, prison sentences were also given to the worst offenders. [115] In other cases, magistrates would grant a complete discharge for reasons of hardship. For instance, in the **Herald of Wales**, the personal circumstances of three unemployed labourers were explained to the Court by Sergeant Davies. In his address, he explained

that although all three men had been caught red-handed on the tips of Fforestfach, each should be treated leniently. Sergeant Davies told the Court:

All the men were married. They had been unemployed for a long time, and were in poor circumstances.[116]

Although this particular case was dismissed outright, others were not so fortunate. In the case of a Gowerton man, Robert Morris, Sergeant Henry James pointed out to the Court that 'a lot of trouble was being experienced in the theft of coal from sidings'. In agreement with the Sergeant's comment, the Chairman of the Bench stated to the defendant:

No end of trouble is being caused by coal-stealers and measures have to be taken to stop it. However bad your circumstances may be, you must not steal.

For the offence of stealing 56lb of coal from Garngoch Colliery, Robert Morris was fined 20 shillings.[117]

Evidence based on newspapers suggests that coal-stealing reached epidemic proportions in South Wales. For example, in 1928 the **Cardiff Times** reported the proceedings at Blaenavon Police Court. In front of the Magistrate on that day were Arthur Andrews, Thomas Evans, Edward Badley and five other juveniles; all were local, unemployed males. In his statement to the Court, however, William Everett of the Blaenavon Coal Company Ltd. asserted that 'hundreds of tons of coal were pilfered from trucks weekly'. The enormity of the problem was such, he added, that on one occasion, when the Company's own police officer saw sixty men 'picking coal thrown from trucks', all he could do in consideration of his own safety was to blow his whistle to warn them off and then run.[118] However, in the **Western Mail** of 1931, magistrates at Merthyr reached the conclusion that coal stealing was so bad in the area that the only answer was to impose heavy fines. Following a 'Night Raid On Pit-Head Trams', as it was reported, ten unemployed men were each fined £2 for the offence.[119]

Along the coastal belt, the dockland areas were also

frequently targeted. In the **Western Mail** of November 1931, magistrates and Court officials were clearly showing signs of impatience with the problem. In the case of Daniel Joseph Callaghan, an unemployed labourer caught in the act of stealing coal from Cardiff docks, the Court Inspector stated that this was 'the sixth case of its kind heard during the past week'. He further concluded that much of this offending was pre-meditated and well organised. As he put it:

Organised groups were working the docks daily, causing the police much trouble, and that many tons of coal had been removed from the sidings.[120]

Evidence from interview also suggested that similar problems occurred at Swansea docks. According to William Lodwig, coal stealing was prolific in and around the main Swansea dock area. As he recalled:

We did what we had to do to survive. There was no work. It makes me laugh now to think of some of the things we did, like giving the dock police the slip when trying to pinch a bit of coal off the train wagons...other times we'd creep onto a ship and try for food or something...anything we could take back. But, you know, back then it was serious, serious if you were caught, but you didn't think of it like that. Food and warmth was everything.[121]

Whilst coal-stealing by the unemployed was a widespread problem, some of the methods used became headline news. At Garnant, for instance, where coal-stealing was announced as a 'serious problem', the **Herald of Wales** particularised the case of three unemployed miners: William Evans, Morgan Vaughan and John Ware.[122] Utilising their experience of mining coal, the three men had managed to secretly re-open the pit known as Lamb Colliery (ingeniously draining it of water, replacing roof supports and opening new seams) an old drift mine which had been abandoned some twenty years previously in 1912. On their return from a 'night shift', with the proceeds of their labour in tow, they emerged wearily at the surface to find Sergeant Richards waiting for them. Clearly annoyed at having been found out, John Ware was reported to have said:

Sergeant, bach, what have we got to say. Only that we worked hard enough for this bloody coal.

Nevertheless, at the trial, Chairman of the Bench, Mr David Richards, remarked at the expertise of the trio but stated that they had nevertheless 'run a serious hazard'. The three men were fined with costs totalling 5s 10d each.[123]

At Cwmavon, Port Talbot, the ingenuity of unemployed, ex-miners caught the attention of the Earl of Jersey. Known as the Squire of Cwmavon because of his ownership of the mineral rights in the area, the Earl was also known for his leniency when perpetrators were brought to trial. In the **Herald of Wales** of January 1934, the Earl suggested that a communal colliery be set up in the Cwmavon area to relieve the distress of the unemployed in the locality. He believed that this would also stem the widespread and illegal practice of people constructing 'proper tunnels in their back gardens to dig for coal'.[124]

Whilst the theft of coal was more often than not a problem for the coal companies, police or magistrates, it was never really an offence of general concern to communities. According to Bertha Freeman, this was because it was 'not really like stealing from each other which was far, far worse, but happened all the same';[125] intimating a distinction of attitude towards criminality. The same sentiment could also be discerned in relation to the killing and stealing of farm animals and poaching. As an issue of community concern, the offence of poaching and the 'stealing of fowls' was not regarded in the same way as, for example, offences against property such as 'breaking and entering'. However, of importance was that it too seemed to reach epidemic proportions as unemployment increased. In the 1930's, for instance, poachers were noted 'to have been very active, with the Margam estate one of the more popular targets'. Again, when apprehended, offenders were not slow to plead the poverty of their circumstances 'as did so many others who took food illegally'.[126] The newspapers also hinted at the scale of the problem. For example, in the

South Wales Daily Post, Superintendent Frederick Smith stated in the trial of two Gowerton men at the Police Court that:

Always in the dark nights there is an epidemic of fowl stealing, and it is only by the greatest of luck that policemen patrolling in dark lanes and bye-ways find the culprits.[127]

Newspaper and interview sources show that these offences were motivated by the need to survive in circumstances of unemployment and hardship.[128] In this respect, evidence is also somewhat implicit in that individual case reports revealed that perpetrators would usually only steal on a very small scale and not for profit, ie. the theft of a single chicken or ewe. That as it may be, two interesting points emerge which relate to the condoning of these crimes by the community. In historical terms, the sanctioning of certain types of offending hints clearly at the operation of what George Rude and Eric Hobsbawm termed the 'moral economy' (A phrase first coined by Edward Thompson in 1961). Although their writings refer specifically to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly within the context of rural society, there are similarities: both coal-stealing and poaching were classic examples of crimes of survival, with the act of theft being justified and condoned on that basis. In the case of coal-stealing, discernibly there was the feeling - hinted at in the comments above - that coal belonged to the miners and not necessarily to the owners of the mines themselves. To a degree, this was understandable given the strong socialist/syndicalist sentiment evident amongst the miners - especially in the Valleys. It was they - the workers - who not only risked their lives removing coal from the pits, but whose dependance on it for fuel was total. To a considerable extent, much of this notion is explored in detail by historians Hywel Francis and Dai Smith in their work **The Fed**. However, what is also evident in this work, is the strong sense of 'class law' militating against the miners' right to protest against the closure of the pits and police protection of 'blacklegs'. Events, which in the decade after the lock-out year of 1926, became known as the

'ten years of hell'. [129] For example, Francis and Smith illustrate vividly the violent clashes occurring between the miners and the police; acts that were compounded by harsh and severe treatment in the Courts across the region. It was precisely these riotous scenes that led the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) president, Arthur Horner, to comment:

To put it bluntly, no one has the right to be violent or to riot unless he was dressed as a policeman, and the arch-thug is the Chief Constable of Glamorgan. [130]

Clearly, it seems, the tensions aroused the feelings of class war, exacerbated by the presence of the police who were seen to operate increasingly as a 'class instrument' of social control.

Reports of offences against property tended to reinforce the findings of other independent inquiries and studies. Overwhelmingly, these reports highlighted both the magnitude and range of offences referred to previously. Again, as a source of evidence to underpin the statistical findings, the printed sources for property crime are a competent match for the corresponding unemployment figures. This, it seems, was not always true for other categories of offence, such as armed robbery or murder. As discussed earlier, the inter-war years saw crimes of violence declining. However, according to a number of reports in the press, which by coincidence were rare, the conclusion that may be reached by some observers suggests that this was anything but the case. For example, the **Cardiff Times** in 1928 reported at length the details of a violent incident in Mount Pleasant, Swansea, when an intruder boldly knocked the door of a house, fiercely dragged the female occupant to a corner, bound and gagged her and proceeded to empty the property of all its valuables. [131] Another young woman who had an equally violent experience was Edith Smart. In the **Cardiff Times**, the woman's ordeal in Cathays Park was unfolded:

She had a terrifying experience returning alone from a cinema...she was crossing Cathays Park when she was

suddenly attacked by an unknown man who thrust a gag in her mouth and struck her several times in the face. When the young woman was half unconscious the man ran away with her handbag.[132]

At Treboeth, Swansea, 19-year-old unemployed Aneurin Morgan also made headline news when, having been apprehended for stealing a motor-car, he produced a hand gun at the police station and was reported to have shouted:

Stick them up. I have got you covered.

His siege eventually came to an end when he was overpowered by police officers who were clearly shaken by the ordeal.[133] In 1934, another report in the **Herald of Wales** described how a masked man with an automatic revolver staged a hold-up of the Carlton Cinema in Swansea. Described as the first crime of its kind in Swansea, the report stated:

While in larger towns of the country there have been many such cases, Swansea has been singularly free from such crimes, and this was the first of the kind.[134]

Reports of violent incidents in South Wales often made headline news, and a brief note on the effect of this is worthy here. In cases of murder, for example, reports of the incidents and Court cases usually ran for several editions. With that in mind, according to an article on 'Catching Murderers' in the **Herald of Wales** in January, 1931, the popularisation of these crimes by the press was claimed to be the main source for generating a fear of crime across South Wales. The report suggested that the sensational exploitation by the press of crimes such as murder led to 'unnecessary alarm' and were not beneficial to the public interest. Violent crime, particularly in relation to murder was only occasionally committed, claimed the article, and the press should be more responsible 'in these difficult times'. Furthermore, these reports had a distinctly negative character because they incited unwarranted criticism of police efficiency, at a time when the public generally should be 'more patient and understanding of the everyday

misdemeanours encountered by the police'. The response from the police - across all forces in South Wales - was consistently critical of the press throughout the 1930's for inciting a fear of crime. Moreover, they claimed, public interest in crime was being 'hideously manipulated by reports in newspapers' of criminal activity that 'bore no resemblance to the true pattern of crime'.[135]

Whether or not the press were responsible for over-burdening public fears in relation to crime remained a matter of contention in the inter-war years. However, in the **Police Review** of 1931, property offences committed against shops, private houses and motor-vehicles had become so serious that not only had police and public attention been 'increasingly occupied' by the problem, but it was thought that the whole policy of punishment and deterrence needed to be reviewed; the scale of property crime being instrumental to this revision on how to deal with those who committed offences against property. Moreover, it was claimed, this was especially poignant in cases concerning criminals 'who obviously intended to commit crime from time to time in order to obtain a livelihood'.[136] Nevertheless, to the editor of the **Herald of Wales**, all of this sympathy for petty criminals was 'nonsense'. In addition to providing something of an insight into the level and impact of crime on society, the editor simply commented that: 'The amount of petty misdemeanours raises the question whether judicial methods are not faulty.' What was needed, he argued, was a greater stress on summary methods and a scrapping of 'binding-over' procedures.[137]

Public opinion was not always condemnatory of the criminal who committed crime due to hardship. In keeping with the view that punishment needed to be reviewed, a letter in 'Postbox' in the **South Wales Daily Post** urged that punishment must take into consideration the circumstances of individuals. Claiming to be representative of the views of judges and magistrates, the letter highlighted the problem of punishment not fitting the crime. Based on the assertion that some sentences were clearly not justified when the circumstances of offenders were brought to light, sentencing,

it was argued, 'must be more lenient'.[138]

Unlike the offences of coal/fuel stealing and, to an extent, the theft of farm animals for consumption, crimes against private property gave rise to concern because it was evidence of people turning on each other and their communities. Essentially these were offences that were condemned by the community; for example, in the **Herald of Wales** of 1931, the Stipendiary, Detective Franklin, commented that over a five month period, the public in Swansea had flooded the police with complaints of stolen property. As he put it:

Many complaints have been received of thefts from motor-cars and the looting of clothes lines...in many cases they had robbed poor people.

The comments of Detective Franklin were made at the trial of four men whose sole occupation, it was claimed, was to steal from motor-vehicles, shops and houses. All four men, pointed out Detective Franklin, were repeat offenders who on previous occasions had appeared before the Court on charges of 'breaking and entering', 'receiving stolen goods' and 'theft'. On this occasion the total value of items stolen amounted to a considerable £50.00. Interestingly, however, Detective Franklin noted that many of the complaints received by the police were from ordinary members of the public who, it seems, 'find it difficult coming to terms with the fact that they themselves had been the victims of crime'. Meanwhile, the police were more concerned about the rise in recidivist behaviour.[139]

In years such as 1928, 1931 and 1933, incidents of housebreaking and burglary reached something of a peak in terms of press reporting. Consistently and almost without exception, the most common items stolen from houses were money, jewellery, clothing and food, such as occurred in a number of incidents around the Cardiff area;[140] for example, following a spate of burglaries in Dinas Powys, which, on one particular night, included three burglaries, one attempted burglary and a motor-vehicle theft, the **South Wales News** reported that the main items of theft included

fruit, fish and a quantity of lamb and beef from a butcher's shop.[141] And, in the **Herald of Wales**, a report from Glamorgan Assizes revealed that 'four pairs of gent's boots, eight neck ties, four collars and other goods' had been the quarry of three unemployed labourers in a house raid at Eaton Crescent, Swansea.[142] Whether or not these items were for re-sale or for personal use was not stated, but in the case of John Samuel Broad the intention was clear. Reported in the **South Wales Daily Post** in 1931, Broad explained to the Court that his present state of unemployment made him so poor that he simply could not feed or clothe himself any longer. Being unemployed, he said, made him do things of an illegal nature that he would 'not normally have considered doing'. Answering a charge of entering a house and stealing an overcoat, Broad, who was previously described as being of good character, stated:

I am sorry. I was a bit tight and did not realise what I was doing.[143]

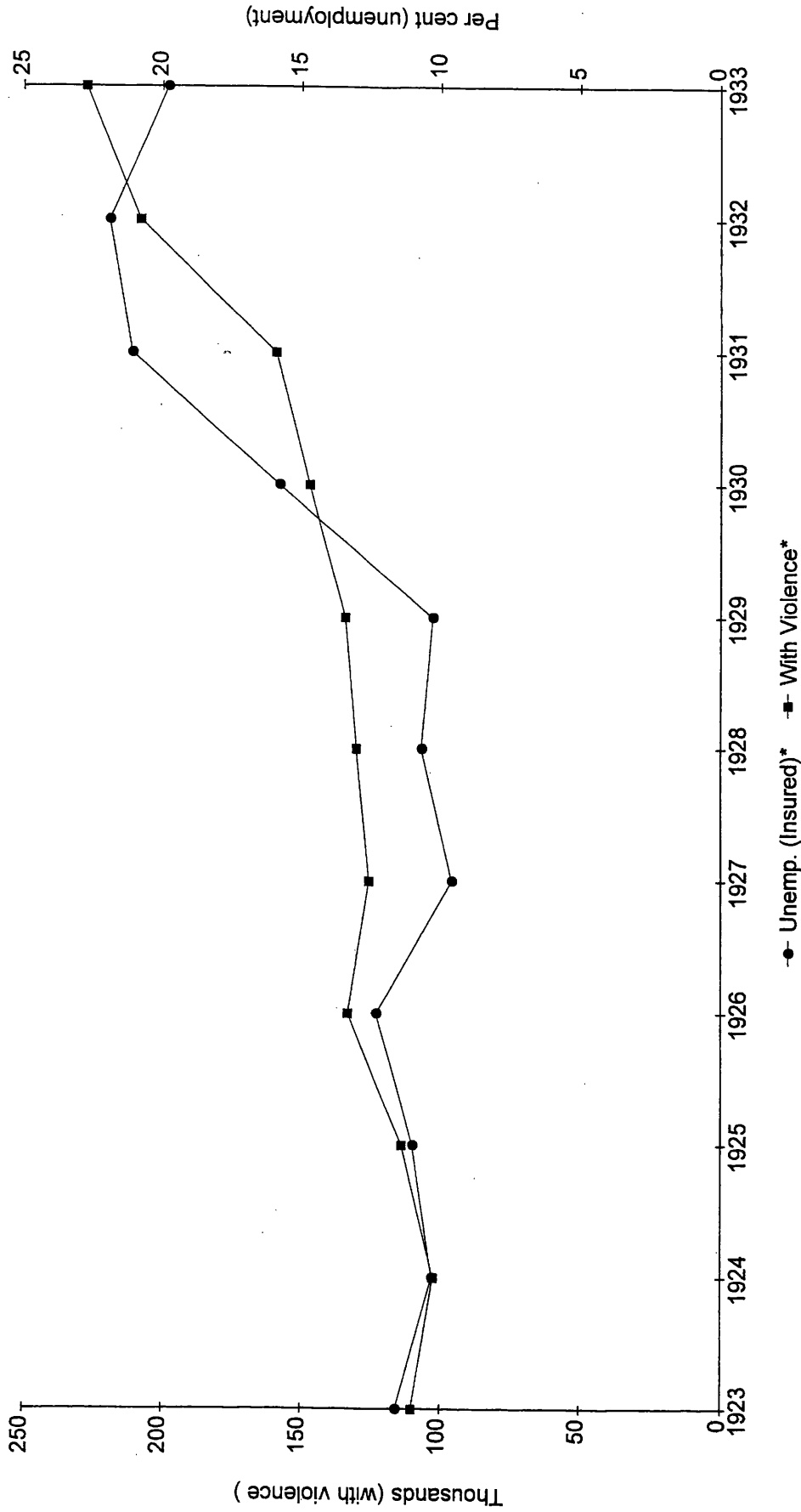
In **The Times** of 1931, the real issue concerning the 'Crime Epidemic' was that the owners of property were simply making the criminal's life too easy. According to Recorder William T. Lawrence, K.C., houses were being left with open windows and doors, all of which was far too tempting for the house-breaker. He warned:

House-breaking was due to some extent to the imprudence of people who occupied those houses.[144]

However, not everyone agreed with this view. In an article on the 'Increase of Crime' by Mr Justice McCardie in the **Listener** in 1931, the 'serious increase in crime' over the past few years was more than merely a case of opportunism or greater opportunity for committing offences. Insisting that the epidemic of crime had left society in a weak and vulnerable position, he stated:

Graph 3.9

Unemployment and Property Offences England & Wales



H. Mannheim, Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars, London: George Allen & Unwin (1940) p. 128 * [Male]

The machinery for protecting society seems not to have been able to cope with the growth in the number of offences....Whole areas lie practically defenceless against the inroads of the burglar and the house-breaker. It is not, however, enough to take a merely repressive view of crime, and to assume that its growth calls for no more than a corresponding improvement in the machinery for its repression. Crime is the normal result of certain bad social conditions...conditions of idleness and poverty, such as arise at a time of prolonged trade depression have a demoralising effect.

For McCardie, 'the real issue at this time' was the fact that residential areas were 'being systematically raided by determined individuals whose personal circumstances did not bear thinking about'. [145]

In South Wales, evidence to underpin Mr Justice McCardie's views was explicit and revealed a worrying level of property offending, highlighted the nature of criminal activity and gave an insight into the circumstances of convicted individuals. For instance, in 1931 the **Herald of Wales** stated that burglaries and property offences in and around the Sketty area of Swansea had reached an intolerable level. It reported that Swansea Criminal Intelligence Division (CID) was investigating several incidents in the first week of January, as well as three burglaries committed over the weekend, where a substantial value of goods had been stolen including jewellery, clothing and cash. [146] Two years later the situation had clearly not improved when, speaking in Cardiff, the Chairman of Glamorgan Quarter Sessions, Sir Rhys Williams, was moved to comment that offences against property such as 'breaking and entering' were now getting completely out of hand. His observations led him to conclude that:

The crime of 'Breaking & Entering' was much too prevalent in the County. Nine out of thirteen cases down for hearing that day concerned that charge. [147]

In the **Western Mail**, figures published in 1933 were damning in the extreme: in the space of just seven years, the offence of breaking and entering had increased by 83 per cent, from 17,116 in 1924 to 31,387 in 1931. [148] Furthermore, this

increase was commensurate with the rise in unemployment as indicated by Graph 3.9:

Included in the crime figures would have been characters such as Horace Wood, an unemployed labourer. Facing a charge at Neath Borough Police Court of breaking and entering, Wood stated that he had travelled extensively to find work and had tried everything to obtain employment. In his address to the Court, he stated that desperation had turned him into a criminal because of his need to make ends meet. As he explained:

I was down and out, and fed up with walking about.
I can't get work anywhere.[149]

Others, who were equally desperate and repeatedly targeted private houses, included Albert Jones and Richard Cray of Neath. Charged with a petty property offence at Resolven, the pair incited the wrath of Superintendent Rees Davies. Clearly becoming impatient with their repeat offending, Superintendent Davies urged the Court to impose a custodial sentence because, as he stated, 'when they were at large, no-one's property was safe'.[150] Meanwhile, in the **South Wales Daily Post**, an unemployed hotel porter gave a 'passionate' description to the Court of how 'abnormal times' had turned him into a house-breaker and, as he put it himself, 'an almost irretrievable wastrel'.[151] At Swansea, a similar description was assigned to Alfred Williams. At his Court hearing, it was explained that Williams, too, had become 'a man of bad character and very violent'. His crimes included thefts from shops, houses and motor-vehicles.[152]

In the late 1920's and early 1930's, observation of cases reported in the press revealed a number of interesting characteristics pertinent to the debate. For instance, reports disclosed that crime could be committed by almost anyone when confronted by ominous circumstances. For this reason, although a matter of opinion, criminals could on occasion be of the most unlikely sort. For instance, there was 36-year-old Arthur Post, an unemployed and once respected policeman, who was in front of the Judge on his fifth

conviction for house-breaking.[153] Another, was Thomas Morgan, a Sunday school teacher of Griffithstown. Having been made redundant by the local colliery, the **South Wales News** reported that he had returned home in a desperate state. A few days later, it was stated in Court that Morgan 'maliciously set his house on fire with intent to defraud insurance companies'. Found guilty, Morgan was sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment with hard labour.[154] Other reports, however, attested to the fact that house-breakers and burglars could be incredibly bold in their attempts, often stealing property from occupied bedrooms at night;[155] or money from under pillows while the inhabitant was asleep.[156] Nevertheless, in an interview with Mrs Rita Thomas* of St. Thomas, Swansea, one instance of burglary in 1931 was vividly recalled. She explained:

You did hear of people having things stolen, course you did, - even from houses where they knew there was nothing much there. I think it's daft to say it was better then than now. You know, like you sometimes read in the **[Evening] Post**.. nonsense. But I remember on one occasion in Pant Street [Swansea] where I was living, a smartly dressed man in a gabardine coat walked right down the street knocking and trying the front doors, bold as brass. When he came to mine he said he was doing survey work and I got suspicious. He asked me some questions and moved on. A little bit later, the afternoon, I think, I heard that Mrs Fox had had her gramophone stolen from the front room and me and a neighbour, who also saw him, had to identify the man in an identity parade...he had no job and did burglary for his living...he got two years' hard labour. [157]

In conclusion, it can be said that the inter-war years witnessed the identification of a debate on two great social evils: crime and unemployment. Whilst the term 'watershed', which has sometimes been used by historians to mark significant social change, may be stressing the point too far, it is sufficient to say that the debate on crime and unemployment was both critical and timely. In the period 1927 - 34, there was evidently a change of attitude in South Wales represented by a growing contempt for the rule of law and order. As a consequence, there emerged a discernible fear of crime and a greater awareness of disorder and

immorality. Across the industrial communities of South Wales, as indeed elsewhere, crime was regarded as being on the increase. In the reports of chief constables, prison governors, social investigators, academics, politicians, magistrates and others, unemployment was increasingly considered to be responsible. And, for those who put their faith in the official published statistics, there was a remarkable correspondence between the curves of unemployment and crime.

Whilst crime historians have often been criticised for ignoring either statistical or printed sources, the combination of both forms of evidence here has hopefully strengthened and contributed to the nature of the debate. As a reflection of criminal behaviour, sources show that the lack of work did contribute to the change in the pattern of crime. In the findings of the Pilgrim Trust and in the writings of academics such as E. Wight-Bakke, unemployment provided enough incentive for those who were sufficiently desperate and demoralised to commit crimes of survival. Or, as one inter-war commentator put it:

...it is probably right to say that unemployment is one of the chief contributory factors to the prison population of today, and, further, that its effect is cumulative, that is to say, a man becomes gradually demoralised by prolonged idleness and is more likely to drift into prison, either through debt or through committing some offence.[158]

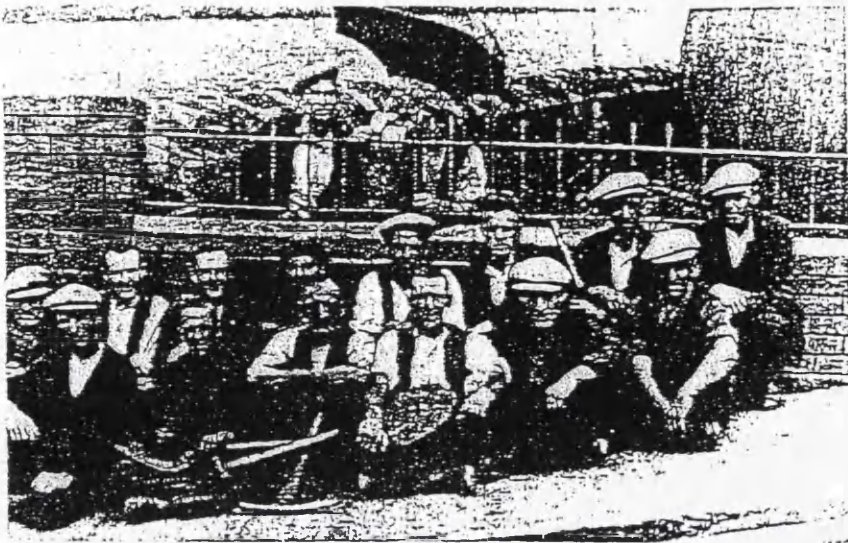
Nevertheless, primary sources also show that larceny, usually of the minor category, was the predominant offence that emerged in this period. Frequently, too, these offences were associated with the fascinations of young, unemployed males, for whom 'joy-riding' held a certain attraction; although it is interesting to reflect on whether or not young, unemployed men could actually drive at this time. It is possible to surmise that many could not, with evidence from interview remaining unclear on this.

In many instances, targeted items tended to delineate essential, everyday articles, such as food, clothing, small amounts of money, fuel and so on. In the Court cases of the

day, these items arguably attested to the desperation of individuals who, faced with no other alternative, focused on the issue of self-preservation. On the one hand, a notable feature of criminal behaviour was that certain misdemeanours, such as coal-stealing, were more or less condoned. In a sense, this was simply nothing more than a reflection of a 'moral economy' which sanctioned other offences such as poaching and contributed to what Francis and Smith have described as the development of a 'society within a society'. [159] As we have seen, commentators such as Reginald Fine were incensed that unemployed miners were being summonsed for taking 'what they thought was rightfully theirs - coal'; arguably a perceived 'right' endorsed by the granting of concessionary coal to miners by the coal companies throughout the twentieth century and standardised to 12 tons per miner under nationalisation in 1948. On the other hand, the two-fold increase in crimes against property such as breaking and entering - often involving the use of motor-vehicles - were condemned. In the Courts, magistrates and judges postulated over sentences designed either to be sympathetic to individual circumstances, or to be deterrent-seeking. Nevertheless, being mindful of the ever present phenomenon of the 'dark figure' of crime, the pattern of crime illustrated that in South Wales, society was less violent but more willing to steal out of hardship. Here, it seems, was also evidence of people turning on each other in difficult times, which, in essence, was very much in line with the earlier predictions of reformers.

As the cumulative effects of unemployment became more visible and open, leading community figures began to address the negative social aspects that ensued. On the one hand, to those involved with law and order, unemployment and crime were clearly inter-related. In spite of this, there was a certain amount of optimism about the burgeoning Boys Club Movement and future offending. On the other hand, for those responsible for spiritual welfare, the whole issue of unemployment and crime was a divisive problem. While some church leaders faced up to the challenge, others were uneasy about the degree to which the Church should become embroiled

in economic, social and political life. Nevertheless, as the following chapters illustrate, it is perhaps not that surprising that some of the more obvious and predominant characteristics discussed above were to re-emerge some sixty years later.



A gang of coal pickers outside 1 Craig Terrace in 1929.

**Michael Lieven, Sennghennydd, The Universal Pit Village 1890 - 1930,
Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1994.**



190 Members of Clydach Boys' Club taken in the early 1930s with members of the management committee and their leader, Graham Churchward, standing on the right

127a

**E. Jones & T. Rowson, Old Brynmawr, Nantyglo & Blaina in Photographs,
Barry: Stewart Williams, 1981.**

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- 47 **Herald of Wales**, 20 January, 1934.
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- 106 See also Table on Average Incomes, Chapter 2.
- 107 Williams, **op.cit.**,p.76.
- 108 **Caerphilly Journal** 28 July,1928; see also **ibid.**, 6 October,1929 and 10 May,1930.
- 109 Lieven,**op.cit.**, p.356
- 110 **ibid.**,p.355.
- 111 **ibid.**,p.356.
- 112 All reports in the course of researching this chapter described offenders of unemployed status - coincidentally or otherwise, none of employed status were found.
- 113 Nicola Heyward-Thomas and Ellys Owen, **Your Century** (Documentary),Cardiff: ITV, 4 November,1997.
- 114 See reported cases in **Western Mail**, 11 November,1931 and **Herald of Wales**, 20 January,1934.
- 115 Interview: Bertha Freeman, 1 May,1996.
- 116 **Herald of Wales**, 5 January,1935.
- 117 **Herald of Wales**, 20 January,1934.
- 118 **Cardiff Times**, 11 February,1928.
- 119 **Western Mail**, 11 November,1931.
- 120 **Western Mail**, 5 November,1931.
- 121 Interview: William Lodwig, 12 December,1996.
- 122 **Herald of Wales**, 6 January,1934; see comments on the scale of coal-stealing in report entitled 'Coal Thrown Into Yard'.
- 123 **Herald of Wales**, 24 January,1931.
- 124 **Herald of Wales**, 13 January,1934.
- 125 Interview: Bertha Freeman, 11 May,1996.
- 126 Jones, 1996, **op.cit.**,p.150.
- 127 **South Wales Daily Post**, 2 January,1929.
- 128 Interview: Will Thomas (Merthyr-Tydfil), 5 December,1995; see also **Cardiff Times**, 7 January,1928; **South Wales Daily Post**, 2 January,1929; **ibid.**, 5 February,1930.
- 129 **Herald of Wales**, 2 February,1935.
- 130 Francis & Smith,**op.cit.**,p.295; see also comments by Chris Williams,**op.cit.**,p.4.
- 131 **Cardiff Times**, 7 January,1928.
- 132 **Cardiff Times**, 2 April,1928.
- 133 **Herald of Wales**, 6 October,1934.
- 134 **Herald of Wales**, 6 January,1934.

- 135 **Herald of Wales**, 24 January, 1931.
- 136 'Editor's Comment', **Police Review**, 4 December, 1931,
op.cit., p.990-1.
- 137 **Herald of Wales**, 2 March, 1935.
- 138 **South Wales Daily Post**, 13 July, 1931.
- 139 **Herald of Wales**, 17 January, 1931.
- 140 See, for instance, cases listed under headings 'Police',
 'Punishment', 'Crime' and 'Courts' in **Western Mail Index**
1933, unpublished index, Swansea Central Library. For an
 idea of the nature of stolen items see **Cardiff Times**,
 January - September, 1928; **Herald of Wales**, January -
 December, 1931; **Western Mail**, 1933.
- 141 **South Wales News**, 28 April, 1928.
- 142 **Herald of Wales**, 14 November, 1931.
- 143 **South Wales Daily Post**, 14 July, 1931.
- 144 **The Times**, 1 October, 1931.
- 145 **Listener**, 18 March, 1931.
- 146 **Herald of Wales**, 10 January, 1931.
- 147 **Western Mail**, 4 January, 1933.
- 148 **Western Mail**, 30 June, 1933.
- 149 **Herald of Wales**, 14 November, 1931.
- 150 **Herald of Wales**, 5 January, 1935.
- 151 **South Wales Daily Post**, 3 January, 1929.
- 152 **Herald of Wales**, 12 January, 1935.
- 153 **The Times**, 4 April, 1928.
- 154 **South Wales News**, 18 February, 1928.
- 155 **South Wales Evening Post**, 16 February, 1934.
- 156 **Herald of Wales**, 29 September, 1934.
- 157 Interview: Rita Thomas*, 25 November, 1995 [*This is a
 pseudonym as requested by interviewee]
- 158 Mannheim, **op.cit.**, p.131.
- 159 Williams, **op.cit.**, p.4.

South Wales Evening Post, Monday, June 12, 1995

Man guilty of begging

A 33-YEAR-OLD Swansea man has been given a six-month conditional discharge by city magistrate for begging.

Christopher John Parson, of Dinas Street, Plasmart, admitted an offence under the Vagrancy Act in Cliffrids Crescent on March 13 this year.

Court Briefs

THE following have been dealt with by Swansea magistrates:

•Mechanic Michael David Evans, aged 30, of Dignity Place, Pontypridd, was fined £40 for shoplifting.

•Unemployed Tracy Ann Taylor, aged 22, of Pandyglasbar Street, Duffryn, was fined £10 for not surrendering to bail.

•Jobless Darren Barwyn Jones, aged 30, of Llannor Road, Llanelli, was given a conditional discharge for shoplifting and fined £10 for not surrendering to bail.

•Unemployed Ken Lee Davies, aged 38, of Penybryn Close, Mardistow, was fined £100 and ordered to pay £14 compensation and £65 costs for damaging a car and breaching a conditional discharge.

Police targeting beggars

By PAUL TURNER

BEGGARS and drunks in Swansea city centre are being targeted by police in an attempt to get them off the streets.

Three people were arrested by officers on Wednesday afternoon after Swansea police decided to take action following complaints made by shopkeepers and traders in the city centre.

The police action was the first part of a summer-long crackdown on vagrants who hassle shoppers visiting the city centre.

"There have been on-going complaints from traders and people using the city centre about drunks and vagrants," said Sergeant Paul Davies. "Obviously we are looking to crack down on it to make the city centre a nicer place to be."

Vagrants

Sergeant Davies said that police in Swansea will be working throughout the spring and summer to protect the city's interests and residents from vagrants and to deter them from getting drunk.

"I think these people tend to come back in the summer because it's warmer," he added. "They are obviously looking for a drink and being drunk and using inappropriate language, people would rather not be exposed to it."

Following the latest police action one man was cautioned and two were taken to hospital, drink and disorderly charges before Swansea magistrates at a hearing he filed.

SWANSEA is the sixth worst city in the UK for car crime, a new survey reveals today.

City sixth worst for car crime

Crime blamed on dole queues

By CLAIRE TASKER

RIISING crime in the South Wales police force area is being blamed on long dole queues and a lack of proper job training for teenagers.

Chapter Four

Crime and Unemployment in the Nineties: A Moral and Political Football

*"I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn't poor,
I was needy. Then they told me it was self-serving to think
of myself as needy, I was deprived. Then they told me deprived
was a bad image, I was underprivileged. Then they told me underprivileged
was overused, I was disadvantaged. I still don't have a dime,
but I have a great vocabulary."*

Jules Fieffer, *Fate of the Poorest*

Some sixty years after the Great Depression, the debate on crime and unemployment re-emerged as a focal point of polemic. In the early 1980's, writers such as Bernard Crick and Marie Jahoda, for instance, commented on the issue in the light of rising, mass unemployment in Britain. Essentially, they concluded that unemployment carried in its wake tremendous social problems which confounded both government and the afflicted alike. With unemployment already high at between 11.4 and 12.1 per cent in the period 1981-2, both commentators were clear on the point that mass unemployment was 'dangerous'. [1] As Crick put it:

Why is the danger of such vast unemployment not seen as well as its immorality and social destructiveness? [2]

By 1989, after a decade characterised intermittently by mass unemployment and deindustrialisation, Britain under Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives was on the edge of another downturn in the economic cycle. Over the following two years, unemployment began to steadily increase and by 1993, some three million men and women were officially registered as unemployed. According to the investigative journalist, Nick Davies, not only had unemployment doubled in the period since 1979, but by 1993, the post-industrial era was well and truly established. Depressingly, argued Davies, over one million were now classed as long-term unemployed, as worklessness increasingly became 'a permanent feature of their life'. [3] Meanwhile, writers such as Beatrix Campbell

remarked on the political aspect of the debate. Specifically, she argued that mass unemployment had social consequences, especially in terms of crime, but that this should be viewed against the background of a 'polarised economy' created by Thatcher which had made:

Millions of young people without work or wage as familiar as traffic lights..[and] created a culture which celebrated the separation of acts from their consequences.[4]

The political aspect of the debate in the 1990's cannot be over-emphasised. In the journal **Police** in 1993, for instance, Tony Blair,MP, insisted that crime and unemployment had become a conspicuous feature of socio-political dialogue - a 'central political issue' by virtue of its adverse effect on the 'quality of life' of ordinary people.[5] With that in mind, certain investigative commentators began to search for answers; many pointed to a direct link between Thatcherite economic policy, the destruction of community life and rising crime. In his work **Dark Heart** (1997), for example, Nick Davies powerfully asserted that unemployment and social exclusion had divided Britain into two countries: an 'undiscovered country' of the poor and an 'elitist' country of the rich. In crude terms, he added, Government policy under the Conservatives had been carefully managed to conspire against the poor in order to create a new world:

...a new world without equality [where] the new wealth of the rich was paid for by the new poverty of the poor.

The effect of this, he concluded, was spiralling crime as the poor reacted in the only way they could; it made their acts understandable even.[6] Nick Danziger, on the other hand, in his work **Danziger's Britain**(1997), reached similar findings, but also noted that people had become incredibly disillusioned with politics as a solution to their problems. In places such as Penrhys in the Rhondda, he argued, unemployment had spawned 'another economy' - a black economy where 'nearly everything was hot except for the weather' and where 'people felt bereaved by the industrial genocide'.[7]

Other writers, however, such as Norman Dennis in his work **Rising Crime and the Dismembered Family** (1993) have taken a slightly different approach by drawing attention to the 'politically correct' conformist intellectuals - such as the **Guardian** reporter, Malcolm Dean - who argued that crime had merely been changing and not deteriorating. Furthermore, Dennis insists, the conformists incorrectly claimed that rising crime since the 1960's had been nothing more than a 'moral panic' in the sense that the public perception of rising crime had resulted in a misplaced 'image of deviance' divorced from reality. Consequently, the debate on crime and its links with unemployment had 'lost all its plausibility'. [8] Instead, he points to the absence of fathers as positive role models within families to counter burgeoning delinquent behaviour, although he admits that the statistical decline in stable families was 'characterised just as much...by the statistical excess of the long term unemployed'. [9]

In the columns of newspapers, the debate on crime and unemployment became a prominent and regular feature of reporting in the modern period. In terms of observation, an analysis of this period through broad-sheet sources suggests that the debate was more conspicuous in the 1990's than in the earlier 1980's; and in order to offer some sort of explanation several newspapers and reports intimated as to why this was the case. On the one hand, the fear of crime at the peak of the recession was deemed to have reached a critical level. In 1991, for example, the editor of **The Times** commented that Britain was 'the most terrified and fearful' of all the countries in Europe when it came to the issue of crime and the fear of crime. [10] By 1994, the fear of crime was still a serious issue when James Murphy, the editor of **Frontiers**, commented that Britons were more worried about crime and its effects than any of its Continental neighbours. As he put it: 'This is a phenomenon which, perversely, unites and defines British society.' In his survey of the 1990's, he found that 56 per cent of Britons were most concerned about crime, compared to 14 per cent in France and 13 per cent in Spain. [11] Also, according to the

1992 British Crime Survey (BCS), it was not just the fear of crime that had increased markedly in recent times, it was the manifest reality of it. In the period 1981 - 91, recorded offences increased by just over 100 per cent, with the greatest increase occurring at the end of the 1980's and the early 1990's.[12] A year later, in 1993, the **Financial Times** underlined the findings when it noted that offending rates in England and Wales had suddenly gathered momentum, stating that now:

Crimes affecting the everyday life of ordinary people have reached record proportions...growth rates in most crimes have accelerated since 1989.[13]

Not surprisingly, one of the first complaints to be made at public meetings, particularly in Wales, concerned inadequate levels of policing. As Maureen Roche, Chairwoman of Ely West Residents' Association in Cardiff, asserted: 'There are not enough bobbies on the beat.'[14] Nevertheless, to some observers the rapid rise in the level of offending after 1989 was a clear sign that unemployment was once again making a social impact. Under the heading 'Link Between Crime and Poverty' in the **Western Mail**, one contributor simply suggested that this was 'irresistable common sense'.[15] Others, however, were not impressed and pointed to the fact that crime rates had grown even during periods of full or fuller employment.[16]

In January 1993, the Government Statistical Service recorded that in the space of three years, unemployment in Britain had undergone a 'dramatic rise' and doubled from 1.6 to 3 million.[17] Alongside the official figures, claims were made that the true rate of unemployment was actually closer to 4 million and, according to Beatrix Campbell in 1993, this was the figure which in the 1990's 'Britain was learning to live with'.[18] In South Wales, unemployment was once again delineated as a regional problem and particularly so in the Valleys of mid - Glamorgan where manufacturing employment had fallen faster than in Wales as a whole. With the vast loss of manufacturing jobs and the virtual disappearance of apprenticeships forming a new

picture of post-industrial Wales, Humphreys and McGoldrick argued that South Wales was once again a 'problem region' where cuts in public expenditure and 'the near disappearance of deep mining in the region' had spawned the return of 'high rates of unemployment and social deprivation'. [19] Meanwhile, the **Financial Times** reported that between 1988 and 1992, manufacturing employment in the region had decreased by 11 per cent compared to 7 per cent for Wales as a whole, leaving an official unemployment rate of just under 14 per cent. [20] In the period 1989 - 93, male unemployment in Wales rose from 9.1 to 14.2 per cent as 37,000 official claimants were added to the figures. [21] Concern was such that a year later, the **Financial Times** pointed out that South Wales was once again in the limelight of worklessness, where pockets of unemployment of 30 per cent and more were commonplace. [22]

In the **Western Mail** in 1996, the Labour MP for Neath, Peter Hain, argued that unemployment in South Wales had been largely ignored by the Government during the recession. More to the point, he insisted that Welsh unemployment figures during the recession had merely shown the tip of the iceberg, as he insisted that the Government had systematically camouflaged Welsh unemployment figures since 1991. He argued that some 33,000 official unemployed had been concealed by the Government and, regardless of that particular fact, the real issue of concern was the economic inactivity of the working population. Based on his own research, he found that around one third of men in Wales were unemployed, with the highest economic inactivity rate of 26.2 per cent for mainland Britain. Moreover, pointing to a Labour Force Survey which confirmed his findings, Mr Hain contended that mass unemployment on such a scale in South Wales was clearly responsible for many of the social problems across the region. He concluded:

Mass unemployment still casts a long shadow over Wales...the Government had failed to conquer structural unemployment and job insecurity and that the central problem was the remorseless rise in male inactivity. Male joblessness is now a menace dogging Wales. It helps

explain many of the social problems afflicting our society, including rising crime, family breakdown and domestic violence.[23]

Contributors to the debate argued that South Wales in the 1990's was a region devastated by high unemployment and crime. According to Robin Turner in the **Western Mail**, the South Wales Valleys were being particularly badly hit and were, quite simply, drawing their last breath. As he put it:

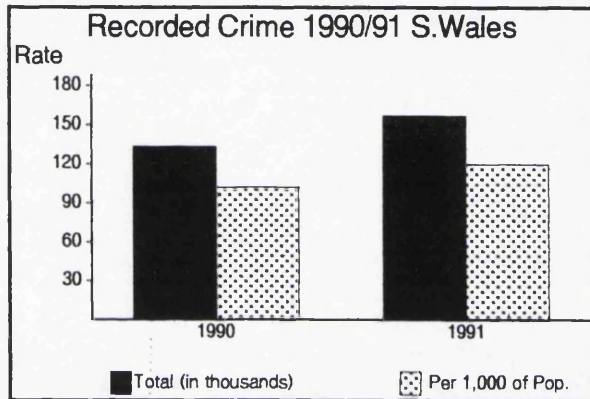
The Valleys are dying. One in three men is officially out of work and one in three young people is officially unemployed. Long term unemployment is desperately high. New jobs are often part-time, always low paid and frequently casual or temporary...Mutual help and support was the pride of the Valley people. Now it is being destroyed. Crime has soared. Drugs are rampant. Young people have no future. Adults have only their past world of work to look back on.[24]

In complete agreement was Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, Ron Davies. In 1993, Mr Davies had already commented in the **Guardian** that the Government's 'Valleys Initiative' had failed miserably. Urging the introduction of a 'New Industrial Programme' to end what he called 'the vicious circle of decline, deprivation, vandalism and crime', he argued that one in five men in the Valleys was unemployed. If the 'hidden unemployment' was included, he added, some 40 per cent of men were out of work which was 'much higher than elsewhere in Britain and a savage indictment'. Also, being under no illusion that unemployment was solely responsible for Wales' social problems, including the erosion of traditional community life, Mr Davies asserted that South Wales was a classic example of a region where well paid manufacturing jobs had been destroyed and replaced by poorly paid service sector industries and unemployment. All of this, he concluded, painted a depressing picture of Wales in the 1990's.[25]

As unemployment began its rapid ascent, recorded crime in South Wales began to show an equally dramatic rise. According to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, recorded crime in South Wales had surged upwards by a staggering 39.3 per cent in the three years after 1989.

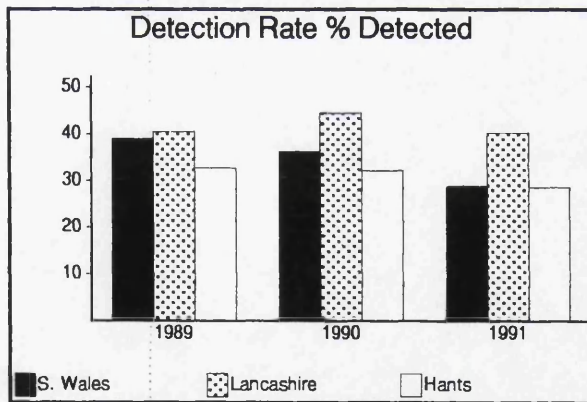
Between 1991 and 1992, it had risen amongst the 'family of forces' (ie. police forces across South Wales) by an incredible 22.7 per cent. The Inspectorate claimed that such a vigorous increase in the figures was a 'disappointment' for which 'there is need for urgent action', especially in light of the fact that detection rates were also dropping year on year since 1989.[26]

Graph 4.1



Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary**, London: HMSO, 1992, p.23.

Graph 4.2



ibid.

Observers who came into contact with offenders whether through the Courts, the police or prisons, detected a growing contempt for the law and, in some cases, a complete breakdown in the functioning of law and order during the recession. Once again, dialogue had a political tone, as David Spratt of the Police Federation exemplified in the journal **Magistrate**, when he stressed:



Contempt for the law in a modern language

Above: The Police Are T****s; Swansea

Below: F**K the Law; 'The Precinct', Gurnos Estate, Merthyr



It is no use the Government pontificating about law and order if the law-abiding citizen and the police receive no support from either Parliament or the Courts.[27]

Some were clearly anxious about the threat to law and order. In particular, there was frustration in relation to the number and scale of attacks on police officers; the rising levels of crime in certain communities; and the general disrespect for the rule of law and the authority of the Courts. In the Annual Reports of the chief constable in the period 1989 - 96, concern was expressed by all divisional forces in South Wales about the rising level of violent attacks on police officers. Throughout the period, chief constables and senior police officers were increasingly mindful of the weapons with which the ordinary policeman/woman were being confronted on a daily basis. Consequently, detailed photographs and accounts of injuries were published as a part of the Annual Report.[28]

In an interview with Police Sergeant Alun Samuel, he indicated that escalating assaults on police officers in recent years meant that each incident, such as a burglary in progress, was potentially life threatening. As he put it:

Police work is more violent in the South Wales area than only as recently as ten years ago. It's one of the reasons why I left South Wales Police for another force. I'm out in the sticks now. Had I stayed in Neath or Briton Ferry, it was only a matter of time before I would have been stabbed or badly injured...Fighting with burglars or some knob-head on call-out happens quite regularly - it's part of the job. Not very nice. But they've nearly all got weapons and that's what's worrying - going prepared - and they'll use them. A uniform, I would say, doesn't mean anything - probably makes it worse I reckon[29]

In the **South Wales Evening Post**, the contempt for law and order was addressed by judges, chief constables, councillors and members of the public. For instance, following a vicious attack on a South Wales police officer, Judge Tom Lewis Bowen was led to comment:

I become injudicially heated when I consider what the police have to put up with when dealing with the criminal

strata of society.[30]

A year earlier in 1989, an equally sympathetic view was expressed in the **South Wales Evening Post** by Bernard Hawkins of Enterprise Security in Swansea, who said: 'Unfortunately, although the police do a marvellous job, their hands are tied.'[31]. Furthermore, in 1991 West Glamorgan County Councillor, Fred Kingdom, commented that the police funding crisis during a period of rapidly rising crime, could not have happened at a worse time. In September of that year, he asserted that:

It is a very unfair burden for the duties falling on the police with breakdown of law and order. It is of such seriousness because of the incidents and the strain on police resources.[32]

However, the most intense expression of concern came from Richard Coyles, Chairman of the Police Federation in 1993. As a response to the violent murder of a police officer, Coyles asserted that whilst public faith in the police was at an all time low in England and Wales, it was now 'no longer inconceivable that the day will come when the British police officer will be armed'.[33] Likewise, in 1990 an article on the South Wales Police Federation printed in the **South Wales Evening Post**, was equally depressing. Addressing the problem of rising crime, assaults on police officers and a discernible disrespect for the law, the article referred to the Police Authority's Quarterly Report which showed that 2,374 days had been lost due to police injury in the course of duty. For 1989, 759 officers were assaulted, 160 as a result needing time off work, and a further 29 officers seriously injured.[34]

According to Acting Police Federation Secretary, Mr John Prosser, the most worrying aspect of spiralling attacks on police officers was that assaults had notably increased since 1988. In the period 1988 to 1989, compensation claims alone had increased by nearly 40 per cent. These findings, he claimed, meant only one thing:

It's definitely getting worse. What the answer is, I

really don't know. It's not just assaults on the police which should concern the public. It's assaults on OAP's...People put forward suggestions that those who assault police officers should have stiffer sentences. But I can't honestly say that would be the answer...Things are getting harder. Perhaps society is.
[35]

In complete agreement was Chief Constable Robert Lawrence of South Wales Police, who acknowledged in 1991 that 'we are in some difficulties'. [36] Three years later, Chief Constable Lawrence asserted that not only was society much 'harder' and more willing to hold the police in some contempt, but it was, at the same time, being incessantly undermined by the breakdown of the family as a consequence of unemployment. If the trend continued to remain unchecked, he added, then the consequences would be dire. As he commented:

We will be more fragmented, more divided and possibly a more unstable society than before. It is a highly dangerous cocktail for policing....there were increasing numbers of households where no-one was in work and the new jobs being created were part-time and going to households which already had someone in work. [37]

It was not just a growing contempt for the police that was notable. Some, particularly magistrates, also observed that many of those who had been convicted of offences in recent years had no intention of complying with rule of the Court. Findings elsewhere suggested that many of those who had received punishment in the form of fines simply did not have the means of paying them; and for those committing 'survival' crimes this was very much a double blow. [38] However, clearly frustrated at the long list of overdue penalties, Senior Magistrates Clerk, Justin Barron, pointed out that in Neath and Port Talbot alone, 4,900 warrants were in existence for outstanding penalties, totalling in excess of £1 million in unpaid fines. As he stressed:

It is a very serious situation. It is so frustrating to be handing out these warrants and then discover thousands are not being executed. The numbers involved are huge. Offenders are getting away unpunished. [39]

In November 1994, an article in the **South Wales Evening**

Post by West Glamorgan's Chief Probation Officer, Martin Jones, was explicit with regard to the debate. Referring to his Annual Report for that year and under the headline 'Crime Blamed On Dole Queues', Mr Jones stated that the growing contempt for the law and the soaring crime rates in the early 1990's must be understood within the context of the times. Having been in his senior position for some fourteen years, he confirmed there was absolutely no doubt that rising crime in Wales was related to rising unemployment. Unemployment, he argued, engendered a feeling of hopelessness and despair which ultimately manifested itself in criminal activity. As he put it:

Unemployment and few job-training opportunities for young people have contributed to the rise in crime... social and economic factors are to blame for many youngsters falling into a life of crime...many teenagers are turning to crime because they have no job, no money and no self-worth. Everybody needs a sense of self-worth, dignity and prospects for the future. Without these, there is a sense of despair and hopelessness. Before the recession many of today's offenders would have led very different lives.

Mr Jones added that the impact of unemployment on offending in Wales also brought into question all the work falling within the ambit of the criminal justice agencies, including the system of punishment and deterrence. The entire debate, he said, 'is of great concern to everyone'.^[40] Meanwhile, chief constables in England and Wales were startled to find that the majority of offences in their crime reports were committed by people out of work. As Nick Davies noted:

In 1994, the chief constables of England and Wales trawled through their own crime reports and discovered that 70 per cent of their offenders were unemployed. The Government worked hard to deny that there was any link at all between unemployment and crime. But the facts trapped them.^[41]

Furthermore, in an interview with a Swansea magistrate, the percentage was claimed to be much higher than this. As she put it:

What we found in Swansea was that something like 90 per cent of offenders coming before us were unemployed. It's a huge figure and we, or certainly I, wanted to see it reflected in more lenient sentencing...but, what is interesting, though not surprising to me, is that I recently visited Parc Prison in Bridgend where I spoke to Alan Heath the Chief Education Officer. He told me that what depresses him most is the high percentage of young unemployed inmates going through the system: as many as 90 per cent of inmates at Parc were unemployed at the time they committed the offence - that's staggering if you think about it.[42]

Rising crime in the early Nineties, then, may well have been a phenomenon that needed to be understood within the context of the time.

In the **South Wales Echo**, Superintendent Jeff Carroll was clearly one of those who acknowledged the link between crime and unemployment. However, what concerned him more was that police officers were being increasingly seen as uniformed social workers. Highlighting an epidemic of burglaries and drug offences in the community of Aberfan, Superintendent Carrol commented:

Some problems which lead to crime such as unemployment and drugs are social ones and not police ones. How are we supposed to deal with unemployment ? How are we supposed to deal with a drug culture if these people have fallen into it and it's the thing to do ?[43]

Exactly the same sentiment had been voiced by the Police Federation in 1993. In the journal **Police**, concern about the increasingly interventionist role of the police into the domain of social work had raised the question:

Is it the job of the police to try and fill the void created by the failures of the family, the school and the dearth of employment opportunities ?[44]

Meanwhile, according to Vivien Stern, Director of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), crime in the 1990's was all about different social values. Today, she argued, people have a different outlook on life based largely on the social influences pertinent to a particular time. As she pointed out:

A lot of young men who once got their social values from the army are now getting them in prison.

To a degree, this view was echoed by Ms Pamela Meadows, Director of the Policy Studies Institute, who said:

A minority of young men have always been involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. In the past they settled down into apprenticeships, jobs or marriage, and became law-abiding citizens. Fewer are now doing that.[45]

In 1991, the debate on crime and unemployment was an issue addressed at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) at Blackpool. At the conference, which was reported in **The Times** under the heading 'Crime Linked to Unemployment', the Engineering Unions' National Officer, Jimmy Airlie, asserted that the sudden leap in the crime figures was 'a dagger aimed at society's heart'. Also speaking at the podium, Bill Beaumont of the Probation Officers Union made it quite clear that unemployment was responsible for the increase in crime. He stressed that 'rising crime is a direct result of growing unemployment among young people'.[46] In June of the same year, senior Metropolitan police officers issued a statement in **The Times** claiming that the 15 per cent increase in burglaries in a single year was directly and unquestionably connected to the recession. Under the headline 'Police Fear Rise In Burglary May Be Result of Recession', Commander David Stevens commented:

This is a powerful endorsement of new research which suggests that property offences rise during economic downturns... there could be more scope for the police to look at economic forecasts in drawing up crime prevention plans.[47]

The 'new research' referred to by the Metropolitan Police was the result of a Home Office inquiry into crime and economic recession in England and Wales. The research, which was conducted by the leading criminologist Simon Field and was published in 1990, provided the most comprehensive analysis to date into the debate on crime and its relationship to the economy. Essentially, Field showed that

when the economic status of individuals was affected, there was a corresponding impact on property offences; illustrated in Graphs 4.3 and 4.4 below. Referring to the debate on crime and unemployment specifically, Field argued that whilst unemployment *per se* does correlate with certain property offences, it was personal consumption that highlighted this relationship most poignantly. As he pointed out:

Crime does have a strong relationship to the behaviour of the economy, it will be no surprise that some relation emerges when unemployment - alone of economic indicators - is compared with crime rates over time. The data used for the current study shows such a relationship. The strength of the analysis conducted here is that it demonstrates an extremely strong relationship between crime and the business cycle.[48]

Simon Field's investigation led him to conclude that property crime corresponded almost exactly with the fluctuations of the economy. He stressed that:

The relationship is so strong that the last two decades of British economic history are in effect written into the history of recorded crime during the same period...the strong aggregate relationship between consumption and property crime must, at bottom, be explicable in terms of a relationship between the economic status of individuals and their propensity to become involved in crime...This implies that economic interventions which aim to reduce the level of property crime, should seek to secure as well as improving the economic position of individuals at risk.[49]

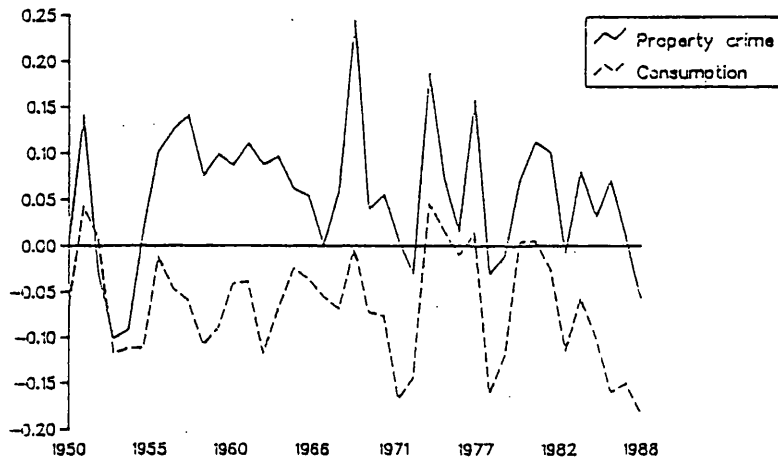
Predictably some six years later, in 1996, a Labour Party White Paper claimed that Field's research findings had made an important contribution to the debate. It argued that social factors such as unemployment and poverty cannot be ignored in the study of crime and reiterated:

Research and common sense indicate a link between social and economic conditions and crime and disorder...The Home Office's own research shows a direct correlation between falling levels consumption during periods of recession and increases in the amount of property crime..Lack of work and training opportunities for young people is

Graph 4.3

PROPERTY CRIME AND CONSUMPTION 1950 - 88.

Annual growth in property crime and annual decline in personal consumption per capita (*3). (logarithmic growth rates)

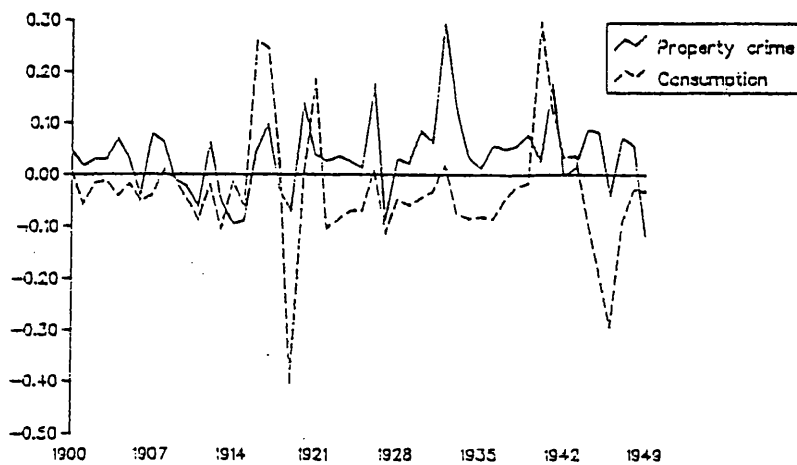


Simon Field, **Trends in Crime and Their Interpretation**, Home Office Research Study (119), London: HMSO, pp.19,21.

Graph 4.4

CRIME AND CONSUMPTION 1900 - 1949

Annual growth in property crime and annual decline in personal consumption (*2). Logarithmic growth rates.



linked to offending.[50]

In being specific about the unemployment - crime link, Simon Field's research was confirmation of an earlier work known as the Cambridge Study. Published in the **British Journal of Criminology** in 1986, the study examined 'Unemployment, School-leaving and Crime' and took a longitudinal view of the behaviour of 411 males from the age of eight and upwards. It found that crime strongly associated with the unemployment experience of a frustrated and cash-less younger generation. The study claimed:

Proportionately more crimes were committed by these youths during periods of unemployment than during periods of employment....Furthermore, unemployment was associated with a higher rate of committing offences for material gain, but was not associated with a higher rate of committing other kinds of crimes. This suggests that one link in the chain between unemployment and crime may be financial need.[51]

Thus, the study concluded:

The present research suggests that young people are more likely to commit crimes when they are unemployed, and hence that decreases in youth unemployment might have benefits in reducing crime.[52]

In the wake of the 1990 Home Office study, the comments and responses of those involved in the business of law and order undoubtedly raised the profile of the debate. In 1993, for instance, the Home Affairs Select Committee produced its report: **Juvenile Offenders**. Once again, its conclusions pointed to the link between crime and unemployment when it stressed that 'there is obviously an unquestionable link in some cases between unemployment, hopelessness and crime'. Added to this, certain senior police officers were clearly concerned and seemed quite willing to breach the barriers of political sensitivity. As Deputy Chief Constable, Tom Cook, of West Yorkshire Police commented:

For several years there's been research which the Home Office steadfastly denied, because it was clearly

politically sensitive to say that there was a link between unemployment and crime. That is very much my perception and, I think very much the perception of most, if not all, working police officers.[53]

Magistrates and Judges, too, proffered a view. Margaret Carey, JP, for instance, insisted in the journal **Magistrate** that:

People offend because they have no stake in society. Taken at its simplest level, people who own nothing and feel alienated, care little about themselves and even less about what or who they damage or destroy. So finding ways of including people is practical and human for both social and economic reasons.[54]

Similarly, in February 1993, the Police Federation was quite blatant in its view that in the 1990's, the absence of meaningful work opportunities meant that crime had become an alternative occupation. As it insisted: 'Crime is a way of earning a living.'[55] Others, such as the Association of London Authorities, placed the blame for society's social problems firmly on the shoulders of those in power. Under the heading in **The Times** 'Police Fear Crime Linked to Recession', the Association concluded that:

The Government must take the blame for failing to tackle the social causes of crime over the last decade.[56]

The recurring association between crime and unemployment was music to the ears of the political Left. Overwhelmingly, they welcomed the findings as not only sensible, but proof of the fact that the Conservative Party could now no longer appropriate the claim of being 'the Party of law and order'; a term largely assigned by tradition.[57] Even loyal Conservative supporters had, by 1994, begun to think differently. As the BBC political correspondent, John Humphreys, pointed out to Conservative Stephen Dorrell, MP:

Traditional Tory supporters no longer see you as the Party of law and order....you have lost the support of your own people...you have now, if anything, moved on to the Labour agenda because there is a clear link - suggested in the latest Home Office proposals - between unemployment and crime.[58]

Nevertheless, with its acceptance of 2 - 3 million unemployed as an inevitable part of British economic life, the Conservatives were criticised in the Nineties for creating social dislocations which provoked negative social responses.[59] And, quick to seize on the opportunity to attack the Government on this issue, Labour MP Roy Hattersley pointed out as early as 1991 that the established link between crime and unemployment undermined any party political claims by the Conservatives on law and order. As he put it in **The Times**:

Sustained reductions in crime may not be forthcoming unless much more attention is paid to links between crime and social conditions and restricted opportunities.[60]

In the same edition, however, Mr Hattersley's comments at 'Crime Prevention Week' in London were even more damning when he stated that not only were the 'Conservatives... no longer the party of law and order', but they had created and presided over 'the worst crime wave in our history'.[61] These attacks, then, particularly on the Conservative response to rising crime, were clearly discomfiting, even though some Conservative ministers hailed Labour's rhetoric as nothing more than an attempt at vote-catching: their comments had been nothing more than a 'peremptory raid on their washing line'.[62]

From the genesis of Margaret Thatcher's 'New Right' through to John Major's 'Back to Basics', the Conservative reply to the link between crime and unemployment was one of overwhelming rejection. As a Party and class-based reply to the view that those who are economically disadvantaged will turn to crime, the evidence seemed incontestable. As one commentator put it:

For criminologists on the political Right, the evidence was conclusive - the prosperity of the 1960's and the anti-poverty programmes had been accompanied by a massive increase in crime rates; for them the alleged relationship between crime and poverty, the basis of almost all prior sociological theorising about crime, was disproved.[63]

Further dissenting views, however, continued to contest any new evidence by turning the debate into a moral argument. In the 1980's, the classic example was the reference made by Conservative MP, Norman Tebbit, to his father's unemployment predicament:

When sacked in the 1930's, he didn't riot. He got on his bike and looked for work.[64]

Similarly, Conservative premier Margaret Thatcher commented: 'Unemployment is no excuse.'[65] In the 1990's, and following a number of disturbances on various housing estates, Home Secretary Kenneth Baker also denied any link between unemployment, poverty and crime;[66] as did Michael Howard;[67] and Michael Heseltine who, in the **South Wales Echo**, advocated more prisons and harsher sentences for offenders.[68] In 1994, Stephen Dorrell, MP, was particularly clear on the point when he insisted that those on the political Left had simply misunderstood the issue of crime altogether. There was, he said:

...a rather important difference, as it happens, between the Conservative Party and our opponents. I think when Mr Blair talks about 'causes' of crime in society, that he misunderstands crime altogether. Crime is a decision. It's a decision by one person to break the law and violate the rights of another..I do not accept for one moment the proposition that social disadvantage is an excuse for crime.[69]

Nevertheless, some commentators have argued that if crime really had been misunderstood in this way, why did the Home Office during the early Nineties seek to 'suppress and conceal research findings' which clearly showed that crime was linked to unemployment? Again, Nick Davies hints that the whole issue of crime being linked to unemployment rested uncomfortably on the shoulders of a Conservative Government that considered unemployment as an inevitable and acceptable price to pay for its reforms. Even more embarrassing, he continued, were the results of an internal review based on a 'huge pool of 397 studies' of offenders in Britain which concluded that 'the biggest obstacle to keeping young people

away from crime was "an inability to offer them any realistic prospects of...the means of achieving material success".[70] In the absence of any definitive answer, one might argue that the issue of crime and unemployment did indeed become politically embarrassing for a Party that traditionally drew electoral support under a banner of 'law and order'.

From the political Left, there had emerged a less simplistic view of the crime debate in the post-war years. As Marie Jahoda (1982), who referred in her work to the unemployment experience in South Wales, pointed out:

Family background, living in a bad neighbourhood, lack of success in school and unemployment are contributing causes, as is the visible affluence of others.[71]

Researcher, Richard Wilkinson of the University of Sussex, reached almost the same conclusion when he commented:

The relationship between increasing income differentials and the various social problems it creates is not necessarily a simple one. A large number of different pathways are involved in the links with crime, child abuse, reading standards, school expulsions, drug taking, child prostitution...However, there can be no doubt that relative deprivation is a component in all these outcomes.[72]

Likewise, and commenting on the 1990's experience, Nick Davies asserted:

There is a complicated maze of pathways which lead away from the safety of a life with health and hope, into the tangled undergrowth. Sometimes these paths intersect or curl back on themselves, so that cause and effect become hopelessly embroiled.[73]

Others, particularly the theorists, have pointed to a changed society in the last fifty years: a society much less tolerant of poverty and more acquisitive and consumerist in nature; a society which had lower moral standards, particularly in terms of youth, and was more willing to express its anger - from the Teddy Boy fights between gangs outside cinemas at Cardiff and Swansea in the 1950's, through to the Joyriders of the 1990's.[74] With that in mind, however, and

aside from Simon Field's Home Office study which illustrates this less simplistic approach to the debate, the change of emphasis also became apparent in the works of leading sociologists. The findings of Lea and Young (1984), for instance, suggested that the worst off in society, which included the unemployed, nearly always correlate with higher crime rates. This was because those who are socially and economically disadvantaged were initiated into poverty and, in this, it was relative, not absolute, poverty that mattered to the debate and especially in association with property offences. As they put it:

It is relative and not absolute poverty that causes crime...it is the subjective experience of poverty that counts and two elements are crucial - the awareness of the fact that you are worse off than others, and the feeling that this is unjust.[75]

Others, such as Glaser and Rice (1959), had reached a similar conclusion in their analysis of the 1950's;[76] and for the 'prosperous' 1960's, J.P. Martin (1962) conclusively found that unemployment led to crime when those with previous convictions were unable to find a job.[77] Furthermore, in the 1970's, Phillips, Votey and Maxwell (1972) found a strong relationship between rates of arrest and labour force inactivity which they published to acclaim in the **Journal of Political Economy**. [78]

Throughout the post-war years, the debate amongst academics of the Left was constantly being refined to include other aspects which could be related to, or considered within, the parameters of unemployment. Perhaps most conclusively of all was the fact that although unemployment was one of a number of factors in the aetiology of crime, and accepting that precise correlations can sometimes be blurred, property offences tended to peak consistently during the worst economic years: this was the 'spine' of the Leftist argument. In 1991, for instance, Roger Williams of the Press Association pointed out in the **South Wales Evening Post** that in Wales, property offences accelerated sharply in line with unemployment. In contrast to the average and somewhat steady

annual rise in crime levels of 5 per cent since 1950, the significant increase in crime by as much as 18 per cent in one year since 1989 was of great concern to all Divisional Forces in South Wales. As Williams argued:

The remorseless rise contrasts with a five per cent average yearly rise in crime since 1950.[79]

That as it may be, David Jones has suggested that the response of some Socialists has been to argue that the conspicuous peaks in the crime and unemployment cycle were probably even endorsed by the politically powerful; a means of wielding exceptional moral influence and subjugation over the economically powerless. In other words, the coincidence between crime and unemployment provided the excuse for those in power to exert and impose greater control and authority over those who were economically and socially marginalised. One might observe, for instance, that the experience of the Thatcher years, particularly at the time of the miners' strike in the mid 1980's, or more recently, the dilution of an individual's right to silence, all conspired against the poor in favour of those in authority.[80] Undoubtedly, the classic example of concern relating to greater authoritarian control was **The Scarman Report** in 1981, which led Lord Scarman to assert unequivocally that 'The state of the law is, however, a mess.' In particular, he drew attention to the 'Sus' provisions, such as Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act of 1824 and Section 66 of the Metropolitan Police Act of 1839, which gave the police invasive and unrestricted rights to stop, search, arrest and detain indefinitely anyone they suspected of crime.[81] As Detective Inspector Jackie Malton recalled in an interview for the **Times Magazine**:

I could bang you up for seven days saying you were helping me with my murder inquiries and nobody would bat an eyelid. We simply weren't accountable. There was no spirit of self-inquiry in the police. Bearing in mind you had all the strikes, the miners and what have you - it was very them and us.[82]

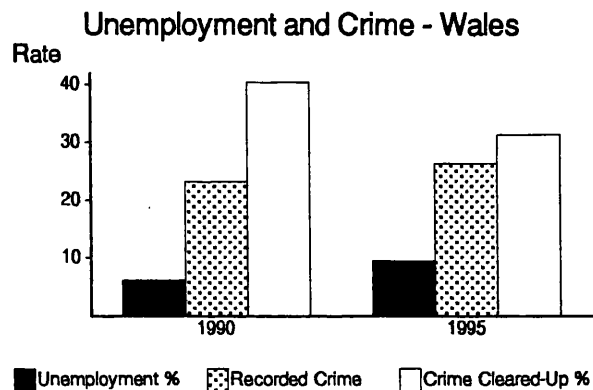
Furthermore, the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984 (PACE) - ushered in as a counter measure

to curb the abuse of police power - did little to quell these concerns. Section 25, for instance, still granted the power of arrest without a warrant for non-arrestable offences; the repercussions of which were demonstrated in the clashes between travellers and police at the Battle of the Beanfield in 1986.[83]

In South Wales, a perceptible feature of various printed sources was that crime and unemployment were debated along relatively simplistic lines. Even in a statistical sense, such an assertion was far from confusing when, in the **South Wales Echo**, an article by Paul Linford highlighted that both crime and unemployment had increased in tandem. Furthermore, clear-up rates had declined almost as expected, as Graph 4.5 indicates, and he succinctly concluded:

Statistics show unemployment, crime and homelessness all up since Major came to power.[84]

Graph 4.5



South Wales Echo, 2 December, 1995.

* Recorded Crime x 10,000 = Total

In the columns of newspapers, unemployment was simply the social evil it always had been. And, whilst arguably multi-faceted, it nearly always added up to the same thing, as Michael Settle in the **Western Mail** put it, 'social division, crime and alienation'.[85] As if to highlight the point even further, one member of the public also remarked somewhat bluntly in the **South Wales Echo** that some people in Wales were not easily fooled by Government claims. In response to Michael Heseltine's comment that crime and unemployment were

separate issues and that crime was falling, the correspondent retaliated:

Heseltine's Party refuse to accept that crime is linked to unemployment and economic factors. I prefer to believe Commander David Stevens of the Met. who says: 'Social deprivation can be linked to most areas of crime, and the Government must address the electorate in terms of a solution.' If crime is falling so rapidly, Tarzan, why do we NEED more prisons ?[86]

Also in the **South Wales Echo**, a letter to the editor under the heading 'Crime Link' was equally trenchant. In response to Government denials of any connection between crime and unemployment, the correspondent declared:

The Tories have obviously, because of their policies over the last sixteen years, denied any connection between the level of unemployment and the rapid increase in crime, especially burglary. Now Michael Howard, Home Secretary, boasts about statistics indicating a significant fall in recorded crime. At the same time, Mr Major boasts of nearly two years of falling unemployment, conveniently not mentioning how many jobs are insecure, low paid, part-time, temporary or contract. Do the Tories still deny that there is no link between unemployment and crime levels ?[87]

Throughout the South Wales region, political judgement was often clear and to the point. In 1991, for example, Shadow Welsh Secretary, Barry Jones, asserted that with crime levels up by 34 per cent within one year in some areas ie. Dyfed-Powys, and an increase in crime of 19 per cent across the region in line with record unemployment levels, the Conservatives had once again failed the people of Wales. As he put it:

Today's crime figures show that the self - proclaimed Party of law and order would be better named the Party of law and disorder. The figures represent a personal tragedy for all those people who have experienced crimes like burglaries, muggings and break-ins.[88]

As a further endorsement, the Labour MP for Cardiff South and Penarth, Alun Michael, released figures which showed that crime in South Wales was saturating the region and that

"burglaries, robberies and theft [were] no longer concentrated in inner-city areas'. As the **South Wales Echo** reported:

He blamed the increase in crime in South Wales on the lack of funding from the Government and the high levels of unemployment in the area.[89]

Alun Michael's claim that crime in South Wales was more than an inner-city problem was echoed in the **Western Mail** by David Phillips who was speaking at a conference of the Montgomeryshire Medical Society. In his advisory role with the National Youth Agency, Mr Phillips pointed out that when it came to the issue of crime and unemployment, rural areas were being largely ignored. In effect, he argued, rural areas today were no longer the safe, idyllic places of previous years but were plagued by exactly the same problems of more urban environments. In rural areas, he said, young unemployed people were getting 'a raw deal' because they felt a tremendous sense of isolation which, ultimately, translated into soaring rural crime rates and a host of social problems. Today, he added, rural areas were being put under intense pressure as a consequence of unemployment. Under the heading 'Youth Survey Shatters Rural Myth', he stressed:

I was quite moved by the levels of distress expressed by some of those who we met and many of them were saying there was nothing in their communities for them... High unemployment and a lack of facilities in rural areas not only led to drug abuse, offending or sexual problems but also prompted many young people to leave in search of hope.[90]

In harmony with the above, an article on rural crime in Wales by Duncan Cambell in the **Guardian** suggested that there was indeed a significant overspill of urban crime into the countryside. In these areas, he claimed, there were 'easy rural pickings' for criminals to exploit, to which the Deputy Director of the Insurance Service also opined 'There is an ever-present danger'.[91]

For some in South Wales, the link between crime and unemployment in the Nineties was, as one correspondent put

it, the essence of the 'feel bad factor'.[92] According to one observer in the **Western Mail**, 'massive political change' had meant that social problems of crime and unemployment were now endemic, especially in the Valleys, where 'the gap between the have's and the have nots is growing bigger'.[93] Commentators also testified that unemployment, poverty, deprivation and crime were responsible for dividing certain areas of Wales into rich and poor. For example, at Newport one correspondent noted in the **Western Mail** that poor districts such as Pillgwenlly and Ringland contrasted sharply with affluent areas such as Llanwern, Bassaleg and Caerleon.[94] More recently, the same claim was made about Swansea in the **South Wales Evening Post**. Under the frontpage headline 'Divided City Is Poor and Sick', Swansea, it was stated, was a city with severe poverty, unemployment and acute social problems. In the wake of a 'Draft Social Care Plan' responsible for publishing the claim, Councillor Lawrence Bailey said:

It is a sad fact that we have some of the most socially deprived areas of Wales within our city. We also have some of the most affluent. The city is divided without a doubt.

Adding to the debate, however, the editor felt compelled to comment:

Today's story about Swansea's severe social problems paints a very gloomy picture. The statistics are both shocking and depressing...The easy option, and doubtless the favourite one in this area, would be to blame the Thatcher era for breeding a selfish, every-man-for-himself attitude, which inevitably had the effect of setting the less well-equipped adrift from the rest.[95]

In 1989 a letter in the 'Postbox' section of the **South Wales Evening Post** raised the point that the people of Wales were tired of being 'locked-out' of 'real' employment. Endless jobschemes and Community Programmes, argued the correspondent, were not the answer and benefited no-one other than statisticians sympathetic to the Government. Ultimately, it was asserted, the unemployed of Wales felt left-out of

society - creating in their minds a sense of nihilism whilst nurturing the fatalistic attitude 'that neither politicians, nor the bureaucrats, nor the trade unions, nor the public, nor those in work, care all that much'.[96] According to the sociologist, Steve Craine, this sense of nihilism often translated into an explosive anger. Following a series of interviews which he conducted - which are too full of unprintable expletives to be included here - Craine found that frequently the only alternative in the minds of a dispossessed, youthful generation was criminal activity; mainly in the form of 'graftin' (property crime). From his research, he found that these youths were generally fed-up 'of being treated "like shit"', 'like some sort of moron', 'like dirt'.[97]

In 1993, an article in the **Guardian** suggested that the real issue was one of structural social change. The writer of the article, Geoff Mulgan, asserted that not only would this impact on voting patterns, but crime would become an increasingly attractive option amongst men. If this continued to prevail, he claimed, then by 1998 British society would be quite unrecognisable. As he declared:

Richard Branson will mean far more to most voters than Nye Bevan or even Tony Benn; 80 per cent of new jobs will be going to women, leaving a rump of unemployable men to drift into crime.[98]

Also in the **Guardian** that year, a report in the form of a diary entry by an unemployed miner contributed to this theme by painting a 'realistic' picture of Wales in the 1990's. Under the heading 'Diary of a House-husband, I Vacuum Therefore I Am Not', the writer expressed concern about the changing face of Welsh life and particularly so in the traditional mining communities. Aware that his own sense of identity had been eroded by unemployment, he made the lateral observation that crime was now another form of free enterprise in Wales. He stated:

Monday: Chat with wife about enterprise culture moving in to replace miners' jobs in Welsh Valleys in line with Major / Thatcher's teaching. Funny how Tories will not

see that crime is just another type of free enterprise - in fact the only one which really operates according to market forces.[99]

Notwithstanding the similarities of tone in the above comments, the perception and experience of social change as a by-product of unemployment were, at least for some, fairly unambiguous. The concern, which was clearly in relation to the strain on social normality, also canvassed a broad cross-section of opinion. For instance, speaking for the entire Valleys region, Rhondda Borough Councillor, Lynfor Roberts, and Rhondda Council's Industrial Development Officer, Clive Medlicott, were of the same opinion in respect of the Valleys' changed character. In the columns of **Wales on Sunday**, Mr Roberts said that when it came to the issue of crime, unemployment and other social issues, 'all the Valleys have problems', to which Mr Medlicott added: 'The root of the problem is mass unemployment.'[100]

According to Peter Hain, MP, mass unemployment in Wales had destroyed many communities in the Valleys and left others elsewhere to die a 'slow death'; old certainties had gone while crime and drugs were rampant. The character of Wales had also changed, he said, and its traditional working-class culture had been altered as social precepts had turned upside down. As he put it:

Now it is the miner's wife working on a third or at best half his former earnings while the husband kicks his heels at home.[101]

Interestingly, however, with Wales being cast in such a despondent and inglorious light, it was perhaps inevitable that nostalgia beckoned the resurgence of the 'Welsh Mam'; or, to be more precise, as the headline in the **Western Mail** asserted: 'Mam is Needed More Than Ever.' Incisively, the satirical notion of the 'Welsh Mam', a pivotal figure often immortalised in "Ceffyll Pren" and whose moral code was traditionally regarded as communal law in times of adversity, was considered by some to be crucial in combatting the social problems of South Wales. Drawing attention to the changing culture of traditional Welsh life, especially in the Valleys

where it was noted that 'in these fast-moving times' working-class society was 'undergoing a sea-change', the report suggested that Valleys' women were once again the backbone of many communities by virtue of their ability to adapt to social upheaval. Moreover, this traditional ability of the 'Mam' to 'carry' communities through difficult times was unique in Wales and:

..should never be underestimated [as] they are qualities the Valleys communities need now more than ever as they face perhaps their biggest challenge fighting the problems of unemployment, deprivation and crime that threaten to confine them to the dustbin of history.[102]

In 1995 the historian Peter Stead pointed out that this quality was 'dynamic' and a particular feature of the 1984-5 miners' strike when, as he put it, 'women were as capable as men of defending the Valleys'.[103] Similar sentiments were also identified by Nick Danziger in his report on 'The Gurnos' in Merthyr. With the majority of men from the estate locked away in prison, Danziger noted that the women had a unique ability of fending for themselves; though often this involved recourse to criminal activity. Identifying poverty as the root cause of many problems on the estate, Danziger stressed:

Life was hard for these women and I wondered what kept them going...Many of the women who remained on the estate still lived the bleak existences of bygone days.[104]

Religious Opinion

In the inter-war years moral judgement pertinent to the debate was not just the preserve of politicians, chief constables, councillors, officials and members of the public. A good deal of outspoken, moral dialogue, as we have seen, fell firmly within the ambit of religious analysis, with the multiplicity of church and chapel denominations - underpinned by strong levels of membership - arguably providing considerable moral, spiritual and physical comfort to the

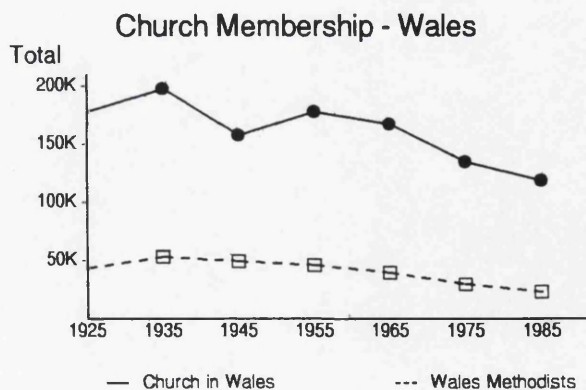
unemployed. In the late Eighties and Nineties, on the other hand, religious comment was still evident, though arguably less profuse in comparison with the inter-war experience.

A key factor which perhaps underpinned the comparative dilution of church comment in relation to the debate, especially in the Welsh newspapers, may relate to the general and growing apathy of the public towards the issue of religion. As a social trend, the disinterest in and decline of religion as a guiding form of moral persuasion, was something addressed by a number of commentators. The historian Kenneth Morgan, for instance, noted that in the 1990's, the decline of the chapels, along with the coal mines and fervent 'political culture', belonged to a bygone age. As he put it:

In 1992, this seemed a world we had lost. Along with its coal mines, chapels and choirs, the Welsh political culture, for the moment at least, seemed almost a part of archaeological 'heritage'. Like Big Pit at Blaenavon, it implied a nostalgic symbol of an immemorial dying society.[105]

Meanwhile, A.W. Halsey's chart on membership is indicative of the scale to which church and chapel now played a lesser part in the lives of ordinary people in South Wales:

Graph 4.6



Peter Brierley, 'Religion,' in A.W. Halsey (Ed), **British Social Trends Since 1900**, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 524.

In the inter-war years commentators such as Rev. Tubb of Monmouth noted that the unemployed were present in some

profusion amid large membership congregations. In the 1990's, however, the picture was quite different: the downward spiral in the membership and attendance of churches and chapels in the post-war era was frequently a topic of debate and instrumental in the closure of many places of worship. Clearly, it seems, the difficulty lay in trying to instil religious fervour into anybody, let alone those on the margins of society.[106] In an article printed in the **South Wales Evening Post** in 1991 by Kathy Griffiths, this precise observation was reinforced by her reference to recent surveys on South Wales, from which she concluded that 'Congregations have fallen dramatically in the last decade'.[107] Also, referring to one such survey, Professor Christopher Harris of the University of Wales Swansea found that congregations were declining by thousands every year. As he put it:

Membership dropped by around 4,000 a year throughout the 1980's and the average congregation is now just 75.
[108]

Perhaps the most obvious sign of religious decline in Wales is the virtual disappearance of the old mass Nonconformity; a factor commensurate with the mass closure of chapels and a remnant 'wasteland' devoid of active churches. With so few members attending the surviving chapels - a point of relentless criticism by ministers - the most popular places of worship remaining were predominantly middle-class Anglican churches, the evangelised gospel halls and, to some degree, the Catholic churches. Such a change in the pattern of religious attendance and observance led Rev. Grenville Fisher to conclude that it 'paints a sad picture of a sad state of affairs'.[109]

To certain observers all this was clearly very depressing: churches and chapels were, and always had been, the traditional backbone of many communities through which spiritual and moral welfare was carefully managed. For example, writing in **The Times** Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach declared that society in general was being incessantly shaken by a prevailing assault on traditional values. In these

modern times, he claimed, where social problems were more open and visible, these traditional values were more important than ever if communities were to survive. He noted that:

With rising figures for violence, divorce, drug-abuse and illegitimacy, it is hard to think that the spiritual and moral well-being of the nation is not in decline...a moral and spiritual basis is crucial.[110]

Others, such as the historian Peter Stead, commented that such a trend had an 'apparent inevitability' about it that was clearly worrying: the closure of the mines, the disintegration of working-class communities and declining levels of Nonconformity, were symbolic of a changing traditional culture.[111]

At the height of the recession, church leaders in Wales did voice some concern in the tabloids about youth unemployment and the social consequences of it. For instance, in September 1991 Rev. Andy Pilcher of Jerusalem Baptist Church asserted in the **South Wales Evening Post** that something should be done for idle youngsters to occupy their time. In suggesting that a 'non-alcoholic' pub may be a good idea, he stressed the importance of youth initiatives 'to provide facilities for youngsters who have little to do and nowhere to go'. [112] A more apposite comment, however, was made by Rev. Adrian Poole of Sketty Baptist Church, Swansea. Following his discovery that the church grounds were being used by bored youngsters during the day for the purposes of drug-taking, he pleaded in the **South Wales Evening Post** for a greater awareness of the problems of youths, as well as a drug patrol initiative: 'it's very worrying', he concluded. [113]

In the Valleys, various chapel denominations did attempt to be more pragmatic in their approach to the problems of crime, unemployment and poverty. In an article in the **Western Mail** on Merthyr Tydfil - the 'Town of Babel' - reporter Mike Gilson voiced his concern about communities like Merthyr which had changed beyond recognition in recent years: morally, spiritually and physically. He intimated

that:

Snapshots in a week of religious life in one town do not come close to giving a true picture of the part God plays in modern Wales. Yet together they offer clues about the future direction of organised religion in communities which have changed beyond all recognition since the days of packed congregations and God-fearing children. What better place than Merthyr Tydfil, centre of Non-conformity, back-to-back chapels and passionate left-wing politics to go searching for clues about worship in a nation which has lost all its old certainties ?

In essence, Gilson's article highlighted the changing nature and character of the Valleys, symbolised by what had happened in recent years in the town of Merthyr. As he stated: 'There is a battle going on in the vacuum created by the economic destruction of a powerhouse town.' To the layman, he said, first impressions are 'favourable', even of a 'vibrant' town. However, if one looks a little closer things are not quite what they seem: decay and religious decline are quite visible beyond the facade. He commented that while 'There are plenty of shut-down chapels, the mighty Bethesda festooned with Oasis flyposters is the most obvious example'. In spite of such disagreeable social change, some ministers in the town were noted to be fighting back to give hope to the unemployed, claimed Gilson. For example, in the centre of town, the Rev. Derek Overfield of High Street Baptist Chapel commented that he was determined to take the mountain to Mohammed by organising lunch-time concerts. This, he said, would also contribute to the church being seen as the centre of the town in cultural terms, although he was openly directing his efforts towards the younger, disenchanted generation living in an increasingly 'agnostic age'. With that in mind, he contended that:

Young people are now at least two generations away from an age of regular church-going and many do not see a relevance to their lives...we say to them 'Hello', this is who we are; this is what we do and leave it at that. Our relevance today must be based upon the community we serve. We say to the unemployed man that you are as important to us as the Chief Executive of Hoover.

Furthermore, on the hill overlooking the town, Gilson cited



The 'Mighty' Bethesda in its heyday
(Photograph: Jacob Jones)



Site of the once 'Mighty Bethesda'

Above: From religion to roadway

Below: The rubble of Bethesda



the example of Father Colin Henneberry, the Catholic Priest of the only church on the notorious Gurnos Estate. Here, and in common with many other estates in Wales, said Gilson, 'Residents make the best of life in these planning disasters amid high crime rates and unemployment'. According to Father Henneberry himself, however, religious meaning in people's lives on the Gurnos was more important than ever before; though reaching out to people who were so obviously left out of society was not an easy task. He asserted that:

You cannot reach out to people who have switched off. But do I feel like I'm wasting my time? Far, far from it. The other day I was talking to a drug addict who asked me to pray with him. He was just glad I was willing to give him the time.. [then] two young boys approached me and asked if they could look inside the church because they had never seen inside before.[114]

Whilst some ministers such as Rev. David Protheroe spoke of the importance of a 'moral code to live by' and 'someone in the pulpit...not afraid to offer a moral lead', others, such as Rev. Nanette Head insisted that if Merthyr's social problems were to be overcome, then 'the Church as a whole needs to get its hands dirty'. Strong words were also proffered by the Rev. Steve Morgan, rural Dean of the Church of Wales in Merthyr. In consensus with those who believed that the church should indeed endeavour to 'get its hands dirty' in times of economic difficulty, Rev. Morgan asserted:

There's been too much proclamation and not enough demonstration. We need a renewal that is charismatic and practical.[115]

Nevertheless, some ministers in Wales saw things differently. Following a spate of vandalism in the Mumbles area of Swansea in 1990, Rev. Geoffrey Thomas was not slow to evince a much harsher treatment for those who had nothing better to do with their idleness than deface and destroy property. Being in favour of a return to 'community policing', Rev. Thomas argued the case for the public humiliation of these offenders. He contended in the **South Wales Evening Post** that:

It would be a good thing if they brought the stocks back in the Church grounds and put these vandals in them for other people to see.[116]

By the mid - 1990's religious intervention into public and social life was appreciably political in character. With a negligible majority in the House of Commons and a tentative grip on power, the Government came under increasing attack from prominent church leaders. For instance, in **The Times** under the heading 'Carey Attacks Howard', the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, launched an attack on the Conservatives for emphasising prison as a deterrent for delinquency. Prison, he said, was not the answer and he indicted the Government for allowing the crime problem to deteriorate. In his view:

...the overall situation is that both crime and the fear of crime have become a lot worse over a period of many years.[117]

Also critical of the Government was the Right Rev. Graham Dow, Bishop of Willesden. Reported in the **Sunday Times** under the heading 'Bishops Revolt Against Tories', the Bishop dealt a damaging blow to Conservative ideology by announcing:

The present Conservative stance with its emphasis on personal responsibility for one another is incompatible with the Christian faith.[118]

Furthermore, in the same article the Right Rev. Peter Hall, Bishop of Woolwich, was equally damning in his comments when he claimed:

Some of the Conservative's policies on law and order are distinctly un-Christian. Under the economic policies followed by this Government, 30 per cent of the population have done disastrously worse.

Most pernicious of all, however, was the collective assault on the Government by Church of England Bishops who openly countenanced the link between crime and the social sphere.

As the **Sunday Times** recalled:

Senior Clergy provoked anger when they endorsed a report which said there was a direct link between crime and poverty.[119]

Whilst leading religious figures condemned the Government on their economic, social and ideological position, the reply was equally abrasive and poignant. For example, the Conservative Peer, Lord Pearson of Rannoch, retorted that the established religions should look closer to home before unleashing damaging comments about the Government and the problems of society. Quite simply, asserted Lord Pearson, it was a bit of a home-goal to blame politicians on issues of guidance and moral leadership when it was clear that 'we are not getting that guidance, that spiritual leadership from established religions'.[120] Rallying to the defence of Church leaders, religious commentator Lesley White stated that in spite of the organised religions in England and Wales being seen as nothing more than 'bleeding hearts' in times of economic and social depression, they were, at least, trying to raise the profile of the debate. In essence, claimed White, it was the Government who were responsible for the 'feel bad factor' and it was the Government who regarded the poor as a political embarrassment, where four million were known to be living below income support levels. On the contrary, argued White, responsibility on this issue rested with those in power who initiated the problems of unemployment, poverty and crime: the established religions were merely offering the Government a 'prickly reminder of an intractable problem'. In this uncompromising view, White concluded:

Most agree an advanced democracy is best judged by how it cares for its vulnerable. Their alienation and the crime it nurtures impinges on us and demands an answer...there is no dignity in poverty, only abject waste and a potentially explosive frustration.[121]

In order to abate the increasing religio-political feud, the Archbishop of Canterbury pleaded for calm. At an all-

church conference on 'Church Action and Poverty', he chastised all the political parties for promoting their own party interests at the expense of ignoring those who were unemployed, excluded from society and living in poverty. Highlighting, once again, the political nature of Church intervention, Dr Carey urged all politicians to 'move away from confrontation to address the suffering caused by poverty'. He further contended:

I believe in the enterprise society and wealth creation...I also believe in the stakeholder society but both will be unsatisfactory if people are excluded from society.[122]

A year later, in the run-up to the General Election, a Council of Churches document printed in the **Guardian** reiterated Dr Carey's criticism, adding that it had been 'the most outspoken intervention in politics for a decade'.[123]

Mass Landscapes, A Lost Generation and the New Crime Culture

In the first half of the Nineties, a compelling feature of the debate on crime and unemployment in South Wales was that it was often regarded to be spatial in character. In one sense, this helped to explain why in certain localities, changes in aggregate levels of unemployment had little meaning or significance. However, according to Beatrix Campbell, certain areas - especially the housing estates - were characterised by an endemic crime and unemployment problem comprising what she termed a 'mass landscape'. As she declared:

Crime was spatialised in the Nineties. The collective gaze was directed at localities...These were places that were part of a mass landscape in Britain, estates came to mean crime.[124]

To Campbell, estates such as Ely in Cardiff were suddenly paradigmatic of a cultural shift. Consequently, the term 'estate', which once stood for modernity, progress and social

improvement, now symbolised in the Nineties, 'rookery, slum, ghetto'.[125]

In the newspapers of South Wales, public attention was drawn to localities where crime and unemployment were not simply transitory social problems. Rather, they were deeply rooted and firmly embedded in everyday community life. In specific areas across the region, reports also revealed the existence of a disinherited sub-class who, according to a Labour White Paper, comprised a 'lost generation adrift from the working population'.[126] With that in mind, the notion of a 'lost generation' was a term championed by a number of commentators. For instance, the Head of South Glamorgan Careers Service, Mike Clarke, spoke of an 'uncomfortable' and 'lost' youth who 'drifted into alternative cultures and criminal activities'. Similarly, the MP for Newport West, Paul Flynn, used the term to denote 'victims of what could be called the dependency culture'. To others, such as the Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers in Wales, David Winfield, the 'lost generation' were simply a 'major stumbling block' - particularly at the school level. They were, he insisted, an army of 'young people who can only see mass unemployment and few job prospects' and who quickly became 'demotivated and unstable'.[127]

For some commentators the notion of a 'lost generation' was nothing more than a pseudonym for 'underclass', a term which according to the **Financial Times** in 1994, was noted to be causing considerable anxiety in Whitehall because of its association with rising crime.[128] Proffering the view that the underclass were indeed an unsettling element in society, the journal **Adults Learning** also commented:

This underclass is seen as having no investment in a cohesive society: they frighten us. They are the 'other' that make up the long-term unemployed, the crime statistics, the neglectful parents, the mad, drunks, junkies and the beggars on our streets.[129]

However, according to the sociologist, Robert MacDonald, the 'underclass' of the Nineties were simply the 'dangerous class' of previous generations. They were, as he defined it:

...a social group or class of people located at the bottom of the class structure who, over time, have become structurally separate and culturally distinct from the regularly employed working-class and society in general through processes of social and economic change and...are now persistently reliant on state benefits and almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods.[130]

The sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, suggested that what existed at this time was a 'new casting of the poor' into a 'new version of the underclass'. The underclass, he claimed, was simply the 'class beyond the classes' and the 'redundant population' where 'Increasingly, being poor is seen as a crime'.[131] More importantly, however, this 'lost generation' or 'underclass' were inextricably linked to the poor, run-down housing estates. It was here, where poverty and unemployment were rife, that the notion of the underclass depicted people living within 'quasi-criminal, anti-social, anti-work cultures of welfare dependancy'.[132] It was here, too, that the 'other' Britain could be found: a Britain that people knew existed yet chose to ignore. As Nick Davies discovered:

Outsiders know very well that this hidden Britain exists...its most important embodiment is in the hundreds of battered council housing estates where its people were born and where most of them spend their whole lives.[133]

It was also here, in the Nineties, that sub-cultures 'mushroomed' into:

Little colonies, looking inwards at their own values and rituals, their own ways of surviving. Little ghettos, fuelled more than anything by crime and drugs - the two clearest and most lethal forms of social damage.[134]

According to Beatrix Campbell, the life experience of a young, disaffected and socially excluded 'underclass' was in some ways unique, but always potentially explosive. These were, she claimed, 'people with nothing, without employment, without credit and without culture'. At the same time, observed Campbell, this was understandable because they were

people who existed below the lowest, acceptable social denominator, leading her to conclude that 'The notion of the underclass displaced the unemployed. They therefore had no class.'[135] A young man from Penrhys Estate interviewed by Nick Danziger echoed almost exactly the same view when he said that 'We no longer work, so I suppose I'm no longer a member of the working class.'[136] Perhaps even more worrying was that, whilst some commentators believed that the underclass were a 'semi-permanent' feature, others were much less optimistic.[137] In **The Times** in 1994, for instance, reporter Simon Jenkins asserted that in many areas of England and Wales there existed a 'trapped underclass' - a product of 'poverty and policy acting in lethal accord'. Searching for a solution, however, Jenkins insisted that only one remedy existed for tackling the burgeoning crime and dependancy culture: work and opportunity. As he stressed:

If there were work, there would be more two-parent families; fathers would stay with their children, children would be less involved in crime and would have less recourse to drugs. This is fact, not Left or Right-wing politics.[138]

In accord with Simon Jenkins, the **Sunday Times** reporter Michael Williams stated in 1994 that the Government's tepid reforms had been useless. Under the headline 'Britain Split as Underclass Takes Root Alongside "New Victorians"', Williams asserted that the underclass were becoming an increasingly permanent feature of British social life, particularly in traditionally 'low-skilled' and 'working-class areas'. Accordingly, he cited the Rhondda district as having become a particularly bad area in recent years. As he observed:

...family breakdown is spinning out of control among a growing underclass dogged by poverty, illegitimacy, welfare dependancy, crime and drug use.[139]

Columnists in South Wales were consistent in highlighting the problems of the housing estates across the region. From Newport to Llanelli, large, problem-ridden council estates

became synonymous with falling moral standards and declining social decorum. Overwhelmingly, these negative and often inescapable images of sprawling estates such as Penrhys, Ely, Llanedeyrn, Sandfields, Penlan, Townhill, Bonymaen and Gurnos were depressingly illustrated in the columns of all the tabloid and broad-sheet newspapers in Wales. To a certain extent, the anxieties of commentators reflected alienation and social division; the run-down estates were frequently geographically close, and sometimes adjacent to, much more affluent areas. Such a distinction, which became immortalised in the film 'Twin Town', provided a unique insight into the nature and scale of this divide.[140] To an even greater extent, the views of commentators articulated trepidation relating to a festering crime culture in which unemployment and poverty were an inherent part of the social matrix. Some investigators, such as Paul Lawless and Yvonne Smith, commented that it was a culture which spawned a vicious circle of social discrimination: to live on an estate in the 1990's was often synonymous with negative social attitudes perpetuated and reinforced particularly through the media. As one of their interviewees in the north of England insisted:

As soon as you say you live on Bell Farm estate, you're some sort of deranged monster...a criminal, can't look after your children, you're in the pub all day.[141]

Some commentators were considerably vexed by the problems associated with large housing estates. At the forefront, the police noted that many areas were completely crime-ridden and 'out of control'. In particular, they pointed to a crime culture born out of unemployment, negative role models and a lack of parental control - collectively the essence of the underclass 'mentality'. In the **South Wales Evening Post** in 1991, for example, Detective Inspector Dave Williams and Chief Inspector Peter Jenkins of South Wales Constabulary attested that the younger generation were becoming increasingly lost to a crime culture which offered a degree of excitement and a certain relief from boredom. According to Chief Inspector Jenkins:

This culture is the biggest influence on youngsters' attitudes. We are talking about a very wide issue here, one which is beyond the scope of just the police. With fathers perhaps missing, or more often unemployed, teenage boys from poorer families look to the older, devil-may-care lads as their role models.[142]

On the northern edge of the Sandfield's estate at Baglan, Chief Inspector Clive Wynne Hughes reached a similar conclusion, adding:

It is a social problem, one which goes far beyond catching and dealing with individuals. I'm not a social worker but you would have to be blind not to see that these kids need something else in their lives. They are caught in a vicious circle.[143]

In complete agreement was **South Wales Evening Post** reporter, Susan Buchanan. Referring to various experts in criminal behaviour who linked unemployment, poverty and social environment to crime, she declared:

A common set of ideals - and a culture which has developed from them - poor housing, poverty, unemployment, and grim social conditions are often seen as the most common reason behind teenage crime, from glue-sniffing to car theft. It cannot be coincidence that the vast majority of youngsters who steal cars in Swansea come from sprawling council housing estates.[144]

In a wider sense, experts in the field of education agreed that many of the problems tended to begin at an early age amidst the most deprived, poverty-stricken localities. Terence Kealey, for instance, asserted that for those trapped in areas of intense poverty such as the run-down estates, the problems of dependancy and delinquency were easily incubated. Moreover, he said, it was very much a political issue. As he put it:

It is the Government that has created the so-called poverty trap which actively encourages young men into a life of dependancy and crime.

In the same report and on a similar theme, the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, commented that the

prevailing crime culture was underpinned by an 'anti-education culture'. From an early age, he said, working-class boys tended to see their futures as inevitably bleak and devoid of opportunity. Thus, they were leaving school with no qualifications and embracing a life of crime and unemployment.[145] Furthermore, commenting on the issue in South Wales, Dr John Talbot of West Glamorgan Health Authority, an expert in criminal psychiatry, asserted that the resort to crime amongst those from poor social backgrounds marked a high point in their lives; a warped sense of achievement even. Pointing to the problem of young joyriders living on the run-down estates in Swansea, Dr Talbot insisted:

Joyriders tend to come from poor social backgrounds. Social engineering on a wide scale looking at things like housing and family issues, needs to be undertaken. When they steal a car it is a high spot in their lives. They like doing it. They do not have the same social and cultural inhibitions the rest of us have.[146]

In the early 1990's, a number of estates across the region acquired appalling reputations for crime and unemployment. In 1991, for instance, the Sandfields estate near Port Talbot emerged as an exceptionally poor area where, it was claimed, juvenile delinquency had brought the community almost to its knees. According to one report, residents had simply had enough of the problems and could see no alternative but to fight back against a crime problem that had clearly spiralled out of control. Organising a network of Neighbourhood Watch schemes, a spokesman commented in the press that 'They have had enough of the rising crime and vandalism on the sprawling housing estate'.[147] In another report, the concerns of residents were clearly not without good cause. Highlighting the problem of crime on the estate, conducted via a council planning inquiry, the claim was made that juvenile delinquency on the Sandfields was amongst the worst in Britain, stating: 'The juvenile crime rate on Port Talbot's Sandfields housing estate is second only to Liverpool.'[148]

In and around Swansea, some estates were similarly well

known for their problems. In the **Western Mail**, for instance, a report on the Bonymaen estate disclosed some alarming findings: one in ten homes had lone parent families; male unemployment stood at 31 per cent compared to a 12 per cent city average (11 and 6 per cent for females respectively); 5 per cent of households housed more than one person per room (the biggest overcrowding problem in the Swansea Unitary Authority area); there were extremely high crime levels of 143 crimes per 1,000 of population; and, although no figures were released, youth joblessness amongst school leavers was described as 'exceptionally high'. The report stated that the problems on the estate were so dire that in addition to anti-burglary initiatives, mobile closed-circuit surveillance was considered an urgent necessity by the Council Policy Committee to combat the problems faced by residents.[149] A few miles across the town, the Penlan estate also regularly made headline news. With a reputation for crime and other social problems, the estate frequently caught the attention of the **South Wales Evening Post**. In 1989, for instance, Swansea City Councillor, Trevor Burtonshaw, bowed to pressure from residents to call an urgent meeting to discuss problems faced by residents threatened by a gang of some thirty youths claimed to be holding residents to ransom. But as the residents pointed out, these were youths who had 'nothing to do and nowhere to go'. Commenting on the problems, Mr Tom Jones of the South Wales Police Authority (SWPA) acknowledged the difficulties on the estate, adding that a solution was not easily found on an estate with a long history of crime-related problems. As he said:

I've every sympathy with the residents. This is not the first time the problems have occurred.[150]

One of the most deprived estates in Wales was widely regarded to be that of Townhill, a large council estate overlooking the city of Swansea. Considered by the European Union as an area of intense deprivation, Townhill was described as so problem-ridden that an emergency rescue plan was devised and initiated to the tune of £4.5 Million. In the **Western Mail**, an article by Colin Hughes also described

From housing experiment to 'problem' estate



Left: Penlan Estate

Right: Townhill (North)



the area as suffering from severe unemployment and a chronic crime problem. He found that over 50 per cent of households on the estate had no-one in employment, and that the official unemployment rate of 21 per cent was almost twice the average for Swansea district. Moreover, he claimed, it was an area that although situated in close proximity to more affluent areas, it distinctly contrasted with its surroundings by virtue of its blatant poverty and crime problem. As he put it: 'It is very remote in many ways.' He continued:

The cash boost is intended to kick-start development initiatives and create badly needed jobs on the sprawling rundown estate hard-hit by crime, poverty and unemployment...There are a lot of stable families there, of course, but, equally, the Hill is home to many physically and economically isolated people.

In terms of a solution, Hughes was clear that many of the problems on the estate were capable of being overcome. To do this, however, unemployment had to be taken seriously and tackled head-on through 'job creation initiatives planned for local people', he said.[151]

Further east, the outlying areas of Cardiff and Mid-Glamorgan witnessed the same familiar problems. At Penrhys estate in the Rhondda, once considered to be 'a desirable place to live' (the houses were the first in the Valleys to have central heating) the estate soon became a dumping ground for those on the margins of society. According to the historian, Teresa Rees, the estate became the antithesis of progress:

Penrhys became the last resort. Steadily, the poorest families, and those with most problems, were funneled into the estate.[152]

Rees further asserted that in the 1990's, when roughly one third of the population of Penrhys changed annually, and where an average of 70 babies were born to single mothers each year, Penrhys estate had become a dangerous place to live. As she put it:

It remains a condition that few could envy. Kay Towel,

who is feeding and clothing five children by herself on benefits of £106 a week, said it was not safe for her children to go out and play. 'You can get attacked just going down the shop', she said. 'An old lady had a firework thrown at her recently, and my little boy finds syringes lying around the place. These teenagers are bored. Its natural they're turning to drugs.' [153]

In 1992, the problems at Penrhys drew the attention of a Home Office Constabulary report. Specifically referring to some of the concerns faced by residents, the report described how:

Police officers and other agencies were aware that serious problems were occurring on the estate, including crime, drugs and vandalism. [154]

Meanwhile, a BBC2 documentary entitled 'Nice work', painted a graphic and depressing picture of Penrhys as an area with more than its share of social problems. Depicted as a social and economic 'blackspot' - an estate over-run with 'drunken, work-shy yobs' - the documentary highlighted the problems of isolation, dependancy culture and crime. In a report which followed the documentary published in **Wales on Sunday**, the problems were described in detail, adding that it 'painted a picture of a divided and depressed area sinking under a wave of crime and drugs'. [155] Others reached the same conclusion. For example, according to Nick Danziger, the Penrhys estate, with its 'black economy', drugs and crime, was an area with a 'tough' reputation. As he put it: 'They warned me that Penrhys was a tough, violent estate where crime was rampant.' [156] However, having stayed for a short while amongst the people of 'Benefit Mountain', as Penrhys was otherwise known, Danziger noted a number of other features apparent on the estate. [157] For instance, against a background of an unofficial, but nonetheless staggering, unemployment rate of 93 per cent, he noticed that people were tremendously disillusioned with politics. This was because, as one interviewee asserted, 'Nothing's going to change around here.' But, as another pointed out, it was also because '[We] don't like using the word Conservative around here.' He also found that, as was the case at Merthyr as we

have seen, that the majority of the men from the estate were locked away in prison for various offences. The effect of this was to increase the sense of psychological alienation they felt, especially upon release. Meanwhile, for the women who remained - and who became increasingly gender unified - not only did they increasingly turn to crime as a consequence, but a negative, vicious circle was set in motion. This gave rise to a feeling of complete and utter hopelessness amongst inhabitants. As he described:

Depending on how you looked at Penrhys, life could be monumentally depressing or unflinchingly heroic. The estate was a story of child abuse, drug addiction, murder, suicides, depression and despair.

Intuitively Danziger intimated that certain misdemeanours were understandable when considered within the confines of such a depressing and destructive environment. As 'Sharon' commented: 'They never talk about the positive aspects of drugs, do they?' [158]

A few miles away, a letter by Ms L.M. Davies of Cardiff drew attention to the severe problems plaguing the Llanedeyrn estate. Writing in the **South Wales Echo**, she claimed that the estate was beyond the control of the police and the authorities. Describing the area as having lost its sense of direction, she commented that the once strong sense of community was now non-existent due to the pressures of high unemployment and spiralling crime. She described Llanedeyrn as:

A large council estate over-run with unemployment and crime [with] people who stay up all night worrying about their children; so desperate that they report their own sons to the police. [159]

However, whilst at Penrhys there was a certain amount of optimism about a new Community Centre initiative under the Penrhys Partnership, at Llanedeyrn, inhabitants put their faith in a new Government sponsored project designed to curb potentially wayward youths who had nothing else to occupy their time. Specifically, the project was aimed at areas of

high crime and unemployment and, at Llanedeyrn, the intention was to encourage youths to renovate bicycles which they might otherwise have considered stealing; the area having a specific problem with bike theft amongst youths. According to youth worker, Andrew Creeber, it was a project with diverse merits, though it was primarily concerned with 'employing the unemployable' in order to instil in certain youths a more positive set of values. As he put it:

Llanedeyrn is an area of high unemployment and social deprivation, so this project will give the youngsters something to do and focus on.[160]

As briefly referred to above, two estates in South Wales that consistently attracted the attention of the public and the police, were Ely in Cardiff and 'The Gurnos' in Merthyr. In the columns of newspapers, both localities were vividly described as being troublesome and beyond the pall of the police. At Cardiff, the reputation of the Ely estate owed a great deal to the events of September, 1991, when an explosion of rioting concentrated the attentions of a number of commentators. According to some sources, the motive seemed obvious: Ely was a mixture of races and cultures searching for an identity - a racial motive to the disturbances was clearly a consideration. However, according to a number of regional newspapers, a racial motive was not really that tenable. The **South Wales Echo** commented how 'There is general agreement that race had nothing to do with the trouble.' [161] Inquiring of the residents themselves, the **Western Mail** reached the same conclusion and stated how 'Residents denied there was any racist motive to the riots.' [162] And, as the Rev. Bob Morgan insisted, 'The public read 'race riot', which couldn't be further from the truth.' [163]

In the search for answers, Beatrix Cambell argued that explanations for the riot at Ely must take into account the notion of the 'underclass', born out of the economic policies of Thatcherism. [164] The people who rioted, she argued, were living on the margins of society. Thus, she claimed, with racism removed as a primal instigator to the troubles, the

motives remaining could only be assigned to 'acts of God and Government: the weather and unemployment'.[165] Furthermore, argued Campbell, what happened at Ely was surprisingly familiar in other areas where rioting occurred in the depths of the recession. As she put it:

All the estates that witnessed riots in 1991 had been living with permanent high unemployment and decline, while they were encircled by evidence of prosperity and renewal.[166]

Also, according to a number of experts in the field, the riots at Ely had a familiar, historical ring to them. Under the heading 'Estates of Despair', the **Economist** in 1991 drew attention to the remarkable similarities with the riots that occurred in the trough of the recession in the early 1980's when Brixton and Toxteth forced Lord Scarman to emphasise the importance of the relationship between mass unemployment and rioting.[167] Similarly, the potential for riot was arguably never far away on The Gurnos estate. For instance, in an interview with one youth, known as 'Brillo'(19), and who warned me to leave the estate as quickly as possible because '...[some] don't take kindly to "egg-heads" round here', he remarked:

This place should have blown f*****g ages ago. Look at it. It's like f*****g Chicago - worse probably cos we all know who's who, like...and who to respect...No-one works round here except the shit [police]. Tell you what, it'll go off one of these days - that's why they're locked in that f*****g fortress [police station] over there, the c***s.[168]

Representing the physical manifestation of problems relating to dependency, poverty, isolation, despair and the underclass, the estate acquired an appalling reputation. Described by Rob Thompson in the **Western Mail** as unimaginably poor and depressed, with 'huge and longstanding unemployment' (an official unemployment rate of 40 per cent), the area was rife for an explosion of anger and frustration because, as he put it, 'high crime and high unemployment have taken a heavy toll on the residents who have been left almost without hope'.[169] Furthermore, he warned that with four out of ten

crimes in and around the Merthyr area being committed on the estate (and where four out of ten children were being brought up by single mothers - the highest ratio in mid-Glamorgan) 'urgent action' was needed to save 'the lost generations of The Gurnos'. [170]

The calls for action and intervention by community leaders, especially in the wake of problems at Ely and The Gurnos, as well as estates elsewhere, were instrumental to the commissioning of a Downing Street report in 1998. Commenting on the findings, Prime Minister Tony Blair said that many of Britain's estates were so riven with the problems of unemployment, poverty and crime, that many were beyond hope. He asserted that 'Some estates are beyond rescue and will never be places where people want to live'. [171] In an interview on BBC1 News 'Online', Mr Blair also insisted that these were by no means obscure problems:

We all know the problems of our poorest neighbourhoods - decaying housing, unemployment, street crime and drugs. People who can, move out. Nightmare neighbours move in. [172]

Reflecting on this specifically in the context of Wales, however, Welsh Secretary Ron Davies, insisted that politicians needed to listen closely to the people who lived on these estates. Rescue packages must include, he said:

Radical programmes...to give unemployed people jobs refurbishing houses on their own estates, the creation of neighbourhood wardens to tackle crime and the setting up of local credit unions. [173]

Finally, underlining the need for a 'radical' approach to the problem, the Social Exclusion Unit commented generally that the people who lived in these surroundings were simply 'trapped' with no means of escape. As the victims of Government 'mistakes', where residents were 'concentrated in neighbourhoods where hardly anyone has a job', the estates of the Nineties were a clear manifestation of social neglect on a huge scale. They were, it concluded, areas of:

...intense deprivation where the problems of unemployment and crime are acute and hopelessly tangled up with poor health, housing and education.[174]

In conclusion, the return of mass unemployment in the post-war period led to the re-emergence of the debate on crime and unemployment. In the recession of the early 1990s, the focus of this study, it was a debate that was intensely political. From the political Left, as we have seen, it was very much a stick with which to undermine the Government on the issue of law and order. Whilst this was a theme adopted by certain religious leaders and more outspoken chief constables, others, such as magistrates, youth workers and councillors, confronted the problem and its consequences on a daily basis. For them, unemployment and poverty were responsible for turning social normality upside down, as communities across the region battled to retain a law-abiding identity.

From the Right of the political spectrum, unemployment was dismissed as an appropriate explanation for the rise in crime levels. Criminals, it was argued, were basically wicked individuals who hid behind the excuse of social deprivation. As Stephen Dorrell, MP, insisted:

Crime is a disease..Crime is a decision..I do not accept for one moment the proposition that social disadvantage is an excuse for crime.[175]

In any case, they argued, how do you explain the rise in crime levels during periods of prosperity? Meanwhile, the response from the Left included an admission that the debate on crime and unemployment was indeed not that simplistic: unemployment, *per se*, was one of many social factors in the aetiology of rising crime. Writers, such as Nick Davies, also asserted that there existed a 'complicated maze of pathways' which led to a host of problems which he collectively termed 'social damage'. Unemployment, he said, and all that it stood for, could not be disassociated from the matrix; it was an inextricable component in the cycle.[176] Nevertheless, there were other researchers, such as Simon Field, who simply referred to statistics and

the fluctuations of the business cycle. In particular, the distinct statistical coincidence between the rates of property offences, falling levels of personal consumption and unemployment. How do you explain that, he countered, other than by specific reference to the social?

In South Wales, observers noted in the early 1990's a discernible threat to law and order. From the police, there was concern about a lack of respect for policing, as well as a growing contempt for the law generally. At the same time, certain leading police officers voiced concern about the police being increasingly seen as uniformed social workers. Unemployment, they argued, was not a police problem; responsibility here rested with the Government, they argued. In a sense, such a view was symbolic of the way in which rising crime was regarded in Wales: crime was seen in simplistic terms with unemployment and poverty being at the forefront of concern in all major newspaper columns across the region. For some, it was a debate that had to be understood within the context of the time: rising unemployment engendered a feeling of despair and hopelessness leading directly to crime. This was, as we have seen, the interpretation of police chiefs and magistrates. Consequently, as recorded crime began its ascent alongside the unemployment figures, the fear of crime fuelled public anxieties whilst detection rates plummeted. Understandably, all major police divisions across the region evinced their concerns.

In the Nineties, the debate was not confined entirely to the period of recession in the earlier part of the decade or, indeed, the late Eighties. Rather, it was increasingly understood in spatial terms. In that sense, crime and unemployment were debated on a different level - as part of a 'mass landscape' - where social disharmony was focused in particular localities; namely the estates. Here, the debate made something of a mockery of the official figures. However, the worrying feature of the estate problem was its socially destructive nature which, according to one observer, 'spawned a culture of crime' and turned communities in on each other.[177] Across the region, this was a theme which

rightfully concerned the majority of law-abiding citizens who witnessed at first hand the destructive nature of unemployment - largely amongst a dispossessed 'underclass'. Following upon their concerns, as we have seen, residents were not slow to communicate their grievances in the columns of newspapers where a variety of offences were described. However, it is the precise nature of these crimes to which we now turn in the next chapter.

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Chapter Five

Offending in the Nineties: South Wales and the Pattern of Rising Crime

*They who have put out the people's eyes
reproach them of their blindness*
John Milton

In 1989, the Annual Report of the Chief Constable for South Wales Constabulary bore testimony to an increase in criminal activity that was to show little sign of abating until the mid 1990's. The Report, which, due to structural and organisational changes in years such as 1969 and 1996, now incorporated the amalgamated territorial divisions of Merthyr, Cardiff, Swansea and Glamorgan Constabulary, highlighted a trend which coincided closely with the pattern of regional unemployment.[1] With some unanimity, the comments of senior, regional police officers disclosed a worrying increase in both property and violent crime. At Cardiff Central Division, for instance, Chief Superintendent Greaves noted that 'offences of Criminal Damage increased by 29.21 per cent'; at Pontypridd, Chief Superintendent Thomas stated how 'the year saw a 10.51 per cent increase in reported crime'; at Port Talbot Division, Chief Superintendent Morgan commented that 'crimes of violence against the person increased significantly by 22.46 per cent from 276 to 338 and ...was a very disturbing trend'; at Cardiff Greater Division, Chief Superintendent Chadwick noted that motor-vehicle crime was 'well out of hand' and 'continued to flourish, accounting for 42.97 per cent of recorded crime'. At Barry, Chadwick was also clearly concerned that the figure for theft of and from motor-vehicles was as high as 35.54 per cent of all recorded crime; especially in light of the fact that 'the same persons were being arrested time and time again', he said. Consequently, with all the main categories of crime showing an increase for that year, Chief Constable Lawrence commented with some dismay that the crime pattern in South Wales was

'particularly disturbing'. Most significantly of all, he noted that a large proportion of property offences, such as Criminal Damage, were being 'committed by bored youngsters who appear to have little direction in their lives'.[2]

In 1990, official figures released by the police for England and Wales showed that recorded crime was continuing to rise. Commenting on the figures released by the Home Office, Roger Williams of the South Wales Press Association commented that:

Crime is continuing to escalate, with new Home Office statistics out today showing the latest in a series of record increases.[3]

Echoing the concerns of police chiefs, the **Economist** declared that within the space of just three months, reported crime in England and Wales had escalated to a record 17 per cent, with property crime accounting for 94 per cent of the total. Essentially, claimed the report, the strain was such that ordinary police officers were simply not coping with their increased workload and 'the rise in crime meant policemen were over-eating and depressed'.[4] Two years later things had still not improved. Figures released for 1992 showed that crime was still on the increase and had scaled even greater heights. Once again, the **Economist** voiced concerns relating to a 16 per cent increase in crime compared with 1990, with property crime accounting for 94 per cent of the total.[5] Adding to the debate, **The Times** insisted that since 1978, reported crime had increased by 90 per cent while clear-up rates had fallen by 10 per cent. In crude terms, this meant that two burglaries were committed every minute in 1991 as compared to one per minute in 1978; and a crime was committed every two seconds in England and Wales irrespective of a 'dark figure' of 'probably' four times the official reported statistics. This was, concluded the report, a clear and sad indictment on Tory Party policy that had created and nurtured a new 'criminal culture'.[6] Reaching almost exactly the same conclusion, sociologist Steve Craine, reiterated the point, stating:

...evidence suggests that recorded crime rose twice as fast under Conservative governments in power since 1979. During the same period, there was a significant increase in the numbers of economically marginalised, socially excluded young people. The 'invisible hand' of policy-driven pauperisation and social segregation accompanied an inexorable increase in the rate of crime.[7]

Burglary

In 1991, the organised Church in England and Wales issued a vehement statement about the sudden rise in the level of property crime. Stressing its concern about the increase in the general level of domestic burglaries, the Church also insisted that the worrying trend for offences of this kind was the persistent targeting of Churches by burglars. Moreover, if present trends were anything to follow, this would mean that one in two churches in England and Wales would now be victims of property crime. The conclusion to be drawn, insisted the report, was that 'the crime wave is rising'.[8] Two years later, in 1993, an article by John Wilman of the **Financial Times** on 'Crime and Punishment' was equally fervent. Raising the point that since the beginning of the recession, crimes affecting the everyday lives of ordinary people had reached record proportions, Wilman contended:

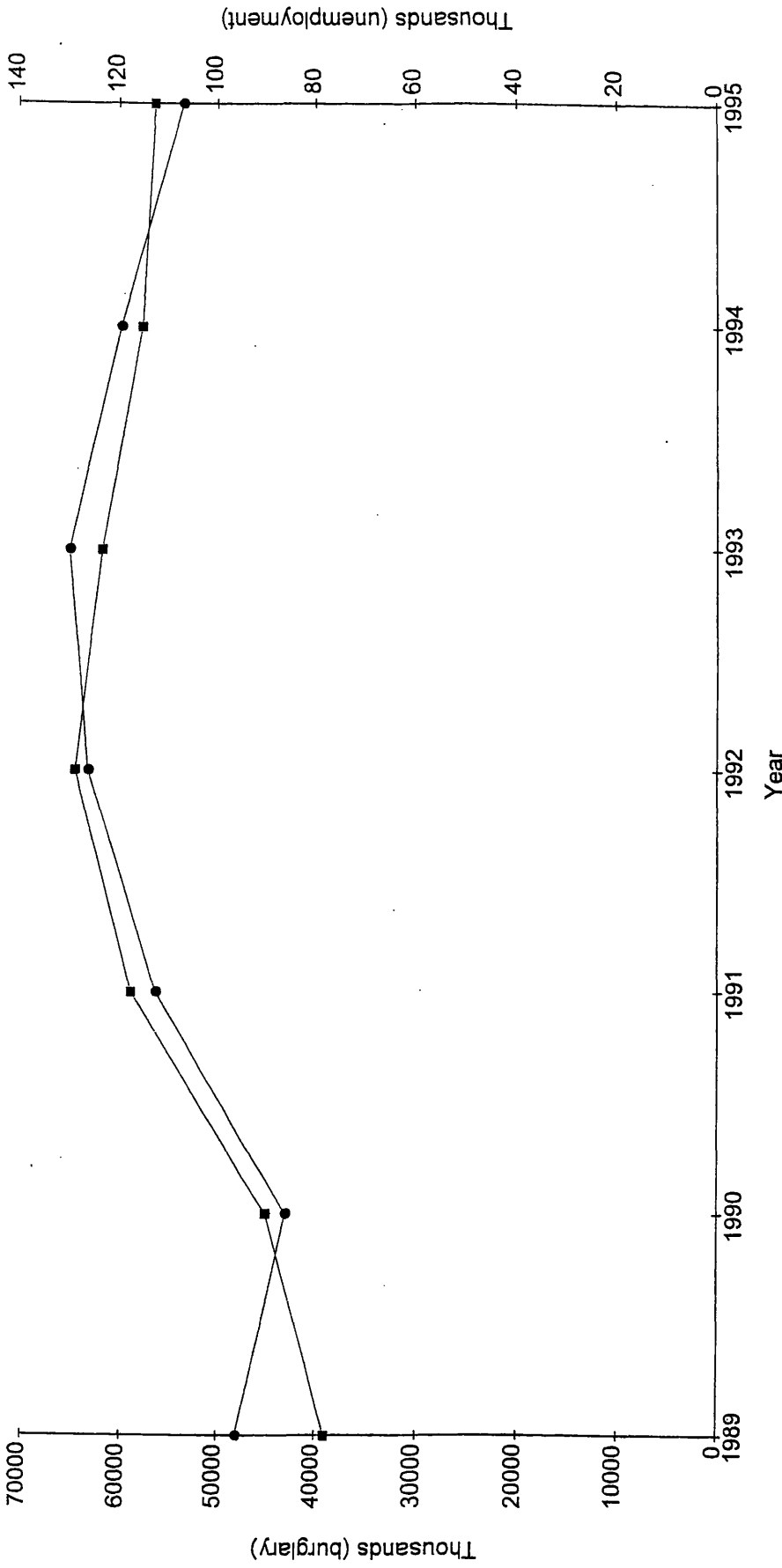
The growth has been enormous. Domestic burglary has almost trebled since 1979, thefts from vehicles are up 243 per cent and Criminal Damage has risen 180 per cent. Growth rates in most crimes have accelerated since 1989.

Furthermore, insisted Wilman, with the once prosperous and lower crime areas such as Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Lincolnshire now experiencing increases in house burglary by as much as 552 per cent, this increase could not be divorced from changes in the wider economy. The explanation, he said, was relatively simple:

Levels of crimes against property grow faster when the economy is in recession and more slowly when the economy is growing.[9]

Graph 5.1

Unemployment and Burglary Wales



Government Statistical Service: Digest of Welsh Statistics, Welsh Office, Cardiff: HMSO (1996) pp. 38-9 & 126 * [Male & Female]

these findings were underpinned by the comments of academics such as Dr David Pyle, an expert on the 'economics' of crime. Essentially, Pyle argued that whilst crime - unemployment relationships can be confusing, statistical evidence gleaned from various sources in England and Wales supported the view that rising crime must, in some way, be linked to rising unemployment. As he put it:

The crime - unemployment link is difficult to prove, but...a 10 per cent increase in unemployment leads to an 8.5 per cent increase in burglary.[12]

Furthermore, a few months previously, Dr Pyle also produced findings which showed that a 1 per cent increase in clear-up rates reduced the volume of burglaries by 1.6 per cent.[13]

In 1993, the journal **Magistrate** pointed out that the 'typical' property offender was more likely to be a repeat offender or recidivist. At the same time, these offenders often possessed a number of characteristics which, to some degree or other, ultimately contributed to an individual's descent into a life of crime. More specifically, these 'characteristics', which included such things as poor family upbringing, low educational achievement, poverty and unemployment, had the effect of displacing any prospect of opportunity in the minds of certain individuals. The result was that work, perhaps seen by some as a means of escape, also lost its meaning: crime increasingly emerged as the only attractive alternative in an otherwise meaningless existence. As the article put it:

He or possibly she...sees few prospects of training, work or personal achievement except through crime. He lives for the day and has little thought of the consequences of his actions (for himself or for others) apart from the immediate gratification they give him.[14]

To some extent, reports printed in the press of South Wales also evinced something of the character and nature of perpetrators. At the same time, reports revealed that magistrates were fairly lenient and frustrated by the number of repeat offenders appearing before the Court. In the **South**

Wales Evening Post, for instance, Haydn Probert (29) was told never to come before the Court again but to 'go away' and 'sort himself out'. Commenting on Probert, who, having been unemployed for five years during which time he had tried to commit suicide, Chairman of Magistrates, Kenneth Morris, stated: 'We are giving you one last chance, so take it.' [15] In the Swansea Valley, another notorious burglar was not so fortunate. Having clearly exhausted the patience of Magistrates for crimes which included a total of eleven offences involving house, shop and public-house burglary, all of which were admitted, the Court sentenced the un-named man to a total of eight months' imprisonment. [16]

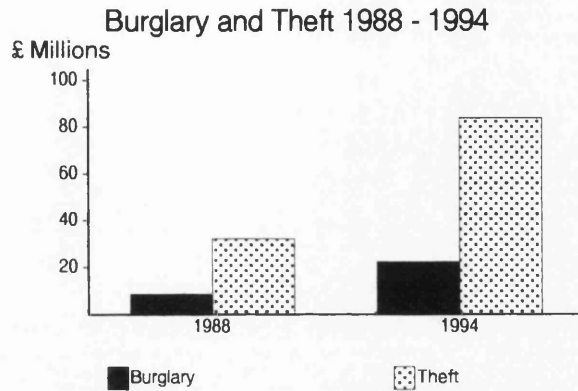
In and around the Swansea area in the early 1990's, a number of reports issued by the police echoed the sudden rise in the incidence of reported burglaries. In March 1990, for example, Chief Inspector Bob Jones of South Wales Police commented that in the space of just a few months, there had been a 'worrying leap' in burglary offences. However, he insisted that a more disturbing aspect was the underlying trend towards violence. Across the South Wales region, claimed Jones, burglaries had become increasingly more violent and especially towards the elderly. Following a recent spate of incidents, he declared in the **South Wales Evening Post** that 'A worrying feature was the number of burglaries where elderly persons were threatened with violence'. [17] A similar trend in the same month was reported at Llanelli. Under the heading 'Police Clamp On Crime', a report in the **South Wales Evening Post** described how burglaries, assaults, criminal damage and car thefts had reached epidemic proportions in the Llanelli area, forcing the police to launch an immediate 'crackdown' on those responsible. [18]

In the **South Wales Echo**, the question of higher property offending in areas of high unemployment was more involved than simply establishing a link between crime and unemployment. According to reporter, Cathy Coleman, property stolen in burglaries and thefts across South Wales over the period of the recession amounted to a staggering £100 million per year. Crime in the Nineties, she insisted, was a costly

business for the people of South Wales:

Graph 5.2

South Wales



South Wales Echo, 16 August, 1996

According to Coleman, in the period 1988 - 1994, the value of property stolen in burglaries increased by 162.6 per cent; for thefts the figure was 150 per cent. Commenting on the findings, Home Affairs Shadow Spokesman and Labour MP for Cardiff South and Penarth, Alun Michael, insisted that the dramatic hike in the figures was clear evidence of the social impact of unemployment during the recession. As Coleman reported of his views:

He blamed the increase in crime in South Wales on the lack of funding from the Government and on the high levels of unemployment in the area.[19]

Car-Related Crime

In the 1990's, car-related crime emerged to become one of the most prominent misdeeds on the property crime register. According to a 1993 **Guardian** news report, car crime (theft of and/or from motor vehicles) in England and Wales had shown a distinct upward trend in the early 1990's: in 1991 the figure for car crime stood at 29.5 per 1,000 of population; in 1992 the figure had increased to 30.4; and over the period 1991 - 93, car crime increased by an official 3 per cent.[20] Elsewhere, other sources translated the increase in the bluntest of terms. As the **Economist** put it: 'A car is stolen

every two minutes in Britain, more than most rich countries.'

[21] In **The Times**, on the other hand, a report in 1991 stressed that one third of all crimes were now car related.[22] However, the difficulty with this type of offending has been to distinguish between 'theft for gain', such as car radios, and 'theft for thrill', or joyriding. In many cases, as indicated below, vehicles were joyridden, had their contents removed/stripped-out and were then set alight to destroy any evidence. Arguably, such a pattern also tends to confuse unnecessarily the categorisation of a crime given the overlaps between, for instance, 'petty theft', 'taking and driving away' and, in the case of vehicles being burnt, 'Criminal Damage' or vandalism.

Statistically, car-related crime, as recorded by proceedings at Magistrates Courts, peaked in the period 1989 - 1992, and only began to coincide with the aggregate pattern of unemployment after 1993; as illustrated by Graph 5.3 overleaf. In the period 1991 - 93, there was clearly a dichotomy in the figures as vehicle theft fell and unemployment increased; a pattern that continued until 1993 when unemployment and vehicle theft correlated, and continued to correlate, until the late Nineties. On the one hand, this may be explicable due to the various 'spotlight' and patrol campaigns waged by the police who relentlessly and specifically targeted car criminals. On the other hand, a more likely explanation would be the implementation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), referred to in more detail below and which, effectively, rendered many areas out of bounds. Nevertheless, in South Wales, car crime was considered to be worse than in any other part of Britain. According to Professor David Jones, for instance, the South Wales of the late 1980's and early 1990's had acquired an appalling reputation for vehicle crime. As he claimed:

With over 300 vehicles disappearing each week, South Wales developed a reputation for being the worst district for this crime in Britain.[23]

Reiterating this view, the **Guardian** crime correspondent, Duncan Campbell, pointed out that car crime in South Wales

stood out because it was almost universal across the region: it was both a rural and urban phenomenon.[24] By 1993, an article by Vivek Chaudhary suggested that not only was South Wales a particularly bad area for this type of offence, but West Glamorgan was easily the most conspicuous blackspot. With 53,488 cars stolen or broken into that year, West Glamorgan as a County was the fifth worst in Britain for being 'at risk' from motor-vehicle crime. Furthermore, underpinning Chaudhary's claim in the **Guardian**, Deri Lewis, manager of West Glamorgan Alternative Project, stated that offenders' motives were simple in the current circumstances. In the absence of meaningful employment opportunities in an area where unemployment was consistently high, Lewis affirmed that items stolen from vehicles were easily translated into cash. As he insisted:

It's quick cash they want. Radios are very easy to get rid of.[25]

According to Keith Broadbent, Clerk to Swansea Magistrates, car crime in Swansea and South Wales had simply reached 'epidemic' proportions in the early 1990's.[26] In the newspapers of the region, this view was echoed when offender profiles revealed remarkable similarities for those who passed through the Courts. For instance, reports on those sentenced disclosed perpetrators who were predominantly male; aged between 16 and 20 years; came from deprived areas; were mostly stated to be unemployed; and were frequently indicted on charges for similar offences. In the **South Wales Evening Post**, for example, a case report revealed the antics of one unemployed 16-year-old youth. Facing a total of 24 charges of 'taking and driving away', the report described how his offences included theft of cars, theft from cars and criminal damage to vehicles. Having admitted all 24 charges, a further 78 charges were under consideration by the Court. [27] Another 16-year-old youth, also jobless, who had already acquired 23 convictions for car-related offences, was given an immediate 12-month custodial sentence for his latest appearance before Magistrates. Facing charges of 'taking without consent', 'assault' and 'driving without insurance',

the youth was described as being 'a real danger both to the public and the police during his hair-raising escapades'. On this occasion, his sentence was secured as a result of dragging a policeman for fifteen feet behind a stolen car. However, having shown some remorse, Chairman of the Bench, Alan Lloyd, told the youth:

Our only hope is that you will learn from it and live up to your own words that you want to stay out of trouble and make a fresh start.[28]

Furthermore, commenting on the case the following day, Chief Inspector Jones of South Wales Police said the youth in question was only one of many known to the police. As he stated:

The sixteen year old youth dealt with by the Court on Monday was only one of a number of youngsters persistently involved in the offence...the police were doing everything possible to combat the trend.[29]

Prominent targets for vehicle crime were the hospitals, enterprise zones and city centre car parks. Commenting on the problem at Morriston Hospital in Swansea, Dr Chris Jones asserted that thieves were persistently targeting doctors' cars under the cover of darkness. Having been a victim himself, Jones described the experience thus:

I was really mad. My girlfriend had just popped in to wish me a happy new year and I was seeing her off at 12.10 am when I saw somebody had pinched my car....People are coming into the car parks deliberately at night when there's little security.[30]

Adding further impetus to concerns, the Chief Constable of South Wales Police, David East, agreed the problem of vehicle crime on hospital grounds was indeed way out of hand. Consequently, at Bridgend, Merthyr and Morriston, he launched with the aid of the **South Wales Evening Post** a high profile crime prevention initiative in order to allay concerns.[31] Elsewhere, certain enclosed car parking areas persistently targeted by thieves warranted the introduction of CCTV to curb the problem. At High Street multi-storey car park,

Swansea, a haunt for joyriders, the pioneering CCTV initiative was greeted optimistically by Council officials. As one Council spokesman put it: 'We hope the system will greatly reduce car related crimes.' [32]

By January 1995, a month after CCTV had been officially introduced to Swansea city centre, optimism surrounding the use of CCTV as expressed in previous years had turned to reality, when police chiefs unanimously agreed that the initiative was 'having a profound effect on criminal activity'. And, in spite of criticism that CCTV cameras merely moved crime into outlying areas, informed opinion was generally welcoming in that car crime was down and police time was being more efficiently utilised. For instance, as crime reporter for the **South Wales Evening Post**, David Stoakes, commented: 'It is already credited with the arrest of car thieves.' Also, South Wales Police Inspector, Trevor Morris, opined how 'it saved us a lot of time and a lot of worry for the people involved'. [33] Elsewhere, the more open and accessible enterprise zones remained a particular problem. At Llansamlet, a notorious target for car thieves, reports of incidents were numerous in the press. As one commentator put it:

Customers are afraid to leave their cars in the car parks as every week vehicles are stolen or broken into and stereo systems taken.

However, staff, too, had their worries; as Second City cashier, Ms Shereen Moore, put it:

I just don't bother bringing my car to work anymore. It's absolutely ridiculous. [34]

The epidemic of car-related crime in the 1990's led to the inevitable question 'why'. According to Nick Davies, the answer was clearly linked to the issue of youth unemployment. With youths in many parts of Britain, especially on the estates, excluded from work and benefits, car-related crime became 'the one great reality of daily life'. In essence, Davies found that vehicle crime thus

became both a means of escape and a means to find the cash they needed to survive. As he found:

There was nothing to do and nowhere to do it. So what did they do with their time? The answer came in a chorus. 'Twocking'. Taking cars without the owner's consent. It was easy.[35]

Searching for answers in South Wales, crime psychologist, Dr John Talbot, concluded that whilst car-related offending - particularly joyriding - was 'a massive job', some clues could be discerned from the social environment in which offenders grew up. In his experience, poverty, unemployment and fatalism played an important part in spawning a great deal of criminal activity - especially joyriding. As he put it:

Joyriders usually, but not always, come from socially deprived areas - the poorest council housing estates...They have a culture of their own. They often have a bleak outlook over their future. Many have blown their chances at school and don't even think about exams or a job.[36]

According to the crime historian, David Jones, the problem of car-related offending in South Wales did indeed have a lot to do with the 'social environment'. Specifically, he identified that in certain areas where the population was poor and unemployed, joyriding held an attraction for those who craved the 'short-term pleasure of a free ride'. As he put it:

Thieves..enjoyed the short-term pleasures of a free drive. This was very prevalent in places like the Bonymaen and St. Thomas area of Swansea, where the population was exceptionally young, unemployed and poor.[37]

In complete agreement was crime correspondent Susan Buchanan, who pointed out that many car-related offences were committed by youths who were nearly always unemployed, or sometimes still at school, and whose social/environmental background merely served to perpetuate a cycle of offending. For that reason alone, she insisted, the whole area of punishment and

deterrence needed to be looked at very carefully. Consequently, she commented that 'Heavy fines seem pointless when the youngster is unemployed, or often still at school.' [38] Furthermore, Chief Inspector Peter Jenkins of South Wales Constabulary was of similar conviction. In 1991, he pointed out that in his experience this type of offending was often intricately associated with what he termed the 'unemployment culture'; a culture which often pervaded an entire family. Thus, he insisted, offenders felt 'locked-in' to an attitude and a way of life that ultimately translated into fatalism and criminality. Joyriding, then, became something of a release. As he concluded:

Many a boy whose family lives on State hand-outs feels the only way to get a ride is to steal it. [39]

Public reaction to motor-vehicle crime prompted the inevitable debate in the 'Postbox' section of newspapers. On the one hand, commentators reflected on more 'peaceful', law-abiding times. For instance, according to a letter signed 'Great-Grandad' in the **South Wales Evening Post**, the associating of car theft and joyriding with poor social environment was nonsense: 'a load of do-good rubbish'. He continued:

To say poor housing, poverty and grim social conditions are linked to car stealing, I would say that is just a lot of rubbish. Try making that excuse to people who lived in the Twenties and Thirties when things were much, much more difficult... People would leave their front doors open, parents taught their children respect for other people and their property, and you got nothing if you did not work for it. [40]

Others, on the other hand, were not so sure and even reflected on tragic, personal experience. For example, in September 1991, a letter from a mother whose son was killed in a joyriding accident made clear that if young people were not provided with employment opportunities or their time was not otherwise suitably engaged, society would simply continue to endure these problems. As she stated:

The reason they are getting in trouble is this society. When they closed down all the cinemas and opened new ones they charged too much to go in - and they stopped National Service. If you stop and think, what is in the area for young lads to do - nothing.[41]

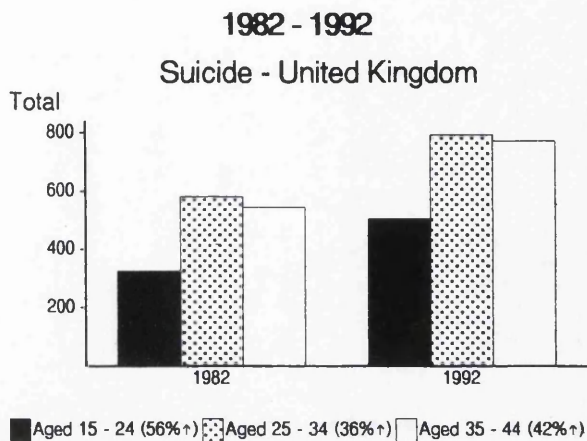
Suicide

In the 1990's, suicide in England and Wales no longer constituted a crime against the State. According to charities such as the Samaritans and Compassionate Friends, the de-criminalisation of suicide after 1961 was a welcoming change; even though terminology such as 'to commit suicide' (as in: 'to commit a crime') still persists to their annoyance. With that in mind, suicide in England and Wales has remained a contentious debate and particularly amongst clerics who see it as a 'moral crime': for that reason certain Church of England clergy still refuse to conduct burial services for those who have taken their own life. Elsewhere, such as in Ireland, it was not until 1989 that suicide was finally de-criminalised and removed from the Statute Book.[42] Whilst suicide, then, may presently be outside the remit of the crimino-legal debate, unlike the 1930's, a note for comparative purposes is appended here.

In 1994, an article by Alex Duval Smith asserted that suicides in England and Wales were once again spiralling. Referring to various experts on the subject, Smith affirmed that unemployment was the most prominent cause, along with contributing factors such as drug abuse and alcoholism. In the period 1982 - 92, when unemployment on two occasions reached record proportions, young male suicides rocketed by just under 60 per cent, he argued. In addition to figures which are replicated below in Graph 5.4, Smith concluded:

Unemployment and general economic hardship...are currently being linked to young men's suicides. There is no evidence that changes in recording procedures over ten years could have affected figures significantly, or that coroners are any less reluctant than they ever were to record suicide verdicts.[43]

Graph 5.4



Guardian, 3 December, 1994

To a large extent, Duval Smith's comments were based on recent research conducted by Colin Pritchard of Southampton University. Having studied suicide in the period 1974 - 88, Pritchard asserted that unemployment was the most important factor in understanding suicides amongst young men. He also claimed that unemployment led to problems which were psych-social, stressful and morally destructive. Unemployment was, he insisted:

...the first link in a chain of events...Unemployment is one of the most stressful events that can happen to a person. There can be little doubt that unemployment damages people's health, and the continued statistical association between being jobless and increased suicides across the continents cannot be ignored.[44]

Furthermore, recent research by Vyv Phillips at the University of Wales Swansea was similarly unequivocal about the link. In her thesis on suicide, the relationship between suicide and unemployment was clearly a tenable one during periods of recession and unemployment. As she concluded:

A number of studies have shown an association between unemployment and suicide..the economic climate may well be an important antecedent variable in the sequence leading to suicidal behaviour.[45]

The newspapers of South Wales highlighted the circumstances of individuals when incidents of suicide occurred. Once again, unemployment was noted to be a

feature.[46] Furthermore, a number of reports were quite explicit about the underlying cause of spiralling suicides. In the **Western Mail**, for instance, it was the sense of despair which unemployment engendered that led many young people - especially those who lived on the estates - to take their own life. As one report asserted:

The same sense of despair shrouds many communities in West Wales. As a Llanelli father struggled to come to terms with the suicide of his 23 year-old son this week, he had no doubts where the blame lay: on the fact that never once in his short life had his child had a regular job or even the promise of work.[47]

In another report, a 'leading expert on suicide among young people', psychiatrist and Emeritus Professor, Gethin Morgan, was of exactly the same accord. In an article in the **Western Mail** entitled 'Angry Young Suicides', Professor Morgan insisted that unemployment was a leading factor for many young suicide victims in South Wales. It was also a problem, he argued, exacerbated by the fact that men were being increasingly displaced by women in the work-place. As he put it:

Unemployment...may be more stressful for young men than women. It may be that young men kicking their heels without a job find it harder to cope or they may be more inclined to get into difficulties...You don't have to have physical brawn anymore. It's not heaving coal but new technology. Although it may be politically incorrect to say so, it could be true that young men are disturbed by the changing role of women.[48]

At Merthyr Tydfil, Dr Johnathan Richards reached a similar conclusion when he stressed that the closure of the mines and the steelworks had a profound effect on the mental health of a number of men. Commenting on Dr Richards' views, reporter, Colette Hume, said:

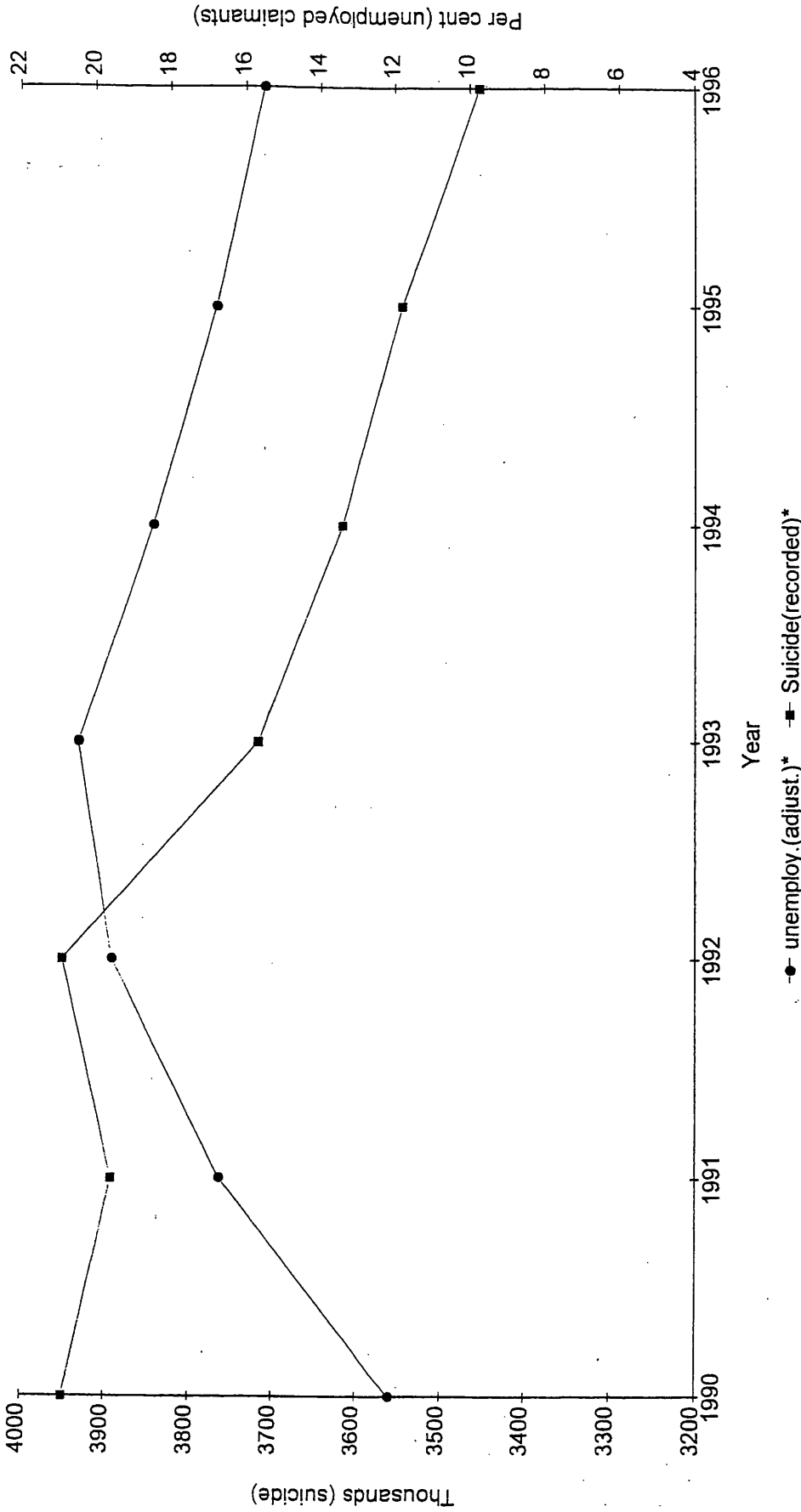
He describes the situation as being similar to that in the film *The Full Monty*, in which five unemployed steelworkers are faced with the prospect of unemployment while their wives go out to work. In one scene, a former steelworker attempts to commit suicide rather than endure life on the dole. Stress is the inevitable consequence

of this rapid role reversal.[49]

According to Graph 5.5, below, cases of suicide in England and Wales (categorised jointly) reached a peak during the early 1990's when unemployment was at its worst level. According to one magistrate, the irony in terms of the debate was that not only were there more 'young unemployed lads' going to prison for minor offences at this time, but, whilst detained, were resorting to suicide and attempted suicide. At Swansea Prison, for instance, where many of the inmates were 'on remand', the early Nineties witnessed a rash of suicides that led directly to an initiative known as the Listening Scheme: an initiative pioneered at Swansea Prison and eventually copied throughout the United Kingdom, whereby inmates were encouraged to 'look out for each other and prevent young lads attempting suicide'. Interestingly, the scheme, which involved only prisoners and not wardens, was credited with giving inmates 'a level of responsibility they had never known before' and which some, subsequently, developed and continued in the community upon release.[50] However, a report issued in Wales by the Samaritans also noted the correlation between unemployment and suicide. The report stated that not only had attempted suicides doubled in the period 1985 - 95, but actual suicides peaked in the trough of the recession in the early 1990's. In the period 1985 - 95, suicides rose from 12.5 to 15 per 100,000; peaking at 18 per 100,000 in 1992.[51] Charts 5.2 and 5.3, below, give an indication of methods most commonly used by suicides in England and Wales. Highlighted, are the different methods employed according to gender:

Graph 5.5

Suicide & Unemployment
England & Wales

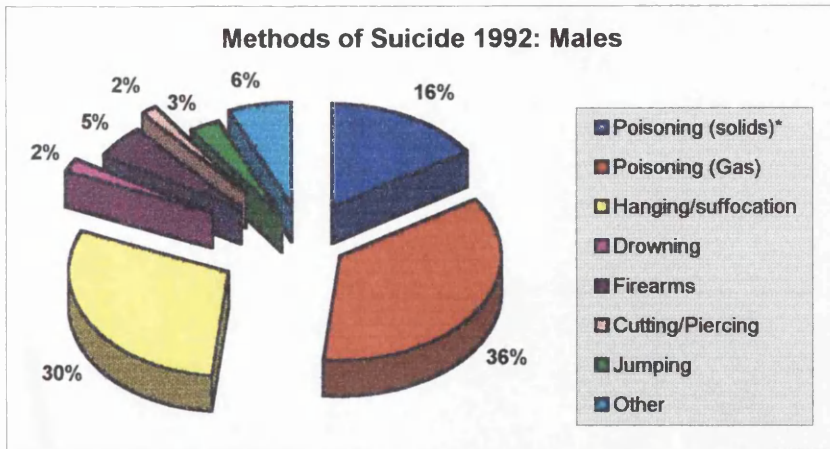


Government Statistical Service: **Annual Abstract of Statistics (134)** London: HMSO, 1998, p.37
 Government Statistical Service: 'The Source Online Database'; London: Office for National Statistics. Available from:
<http://www.Source.Info@ons.gov.uk> (Accessed on 12 March, 1999)

*[Male & Female]

Chart 5.2

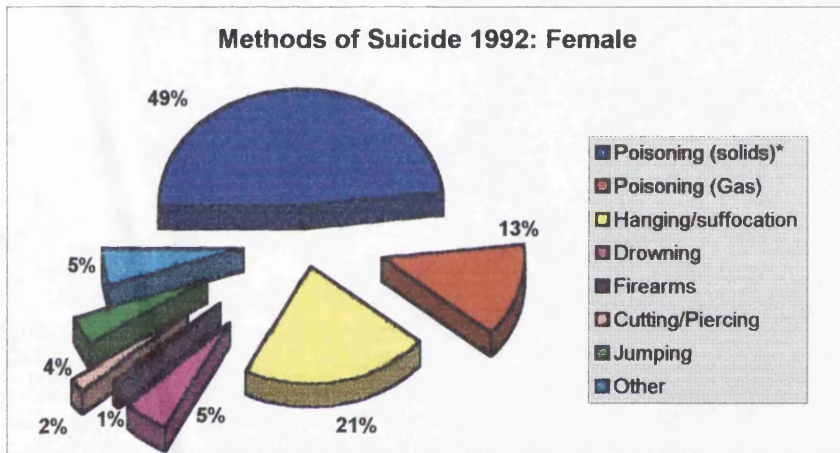
England and Wales



* Includes liquids

Chart 5.3

England and Wales



Vyv Phillips, *Suicide: An Overview of Past and Present Thinking And Strategies for Prevention*; Unpublished M.Sc. (Econ.) Thesis, University of Wales Swansea, 1995.

A number of features appear to stand out in relation to suicide, the first of which relates to gender. For instance, according to the criminologist, Pat Carlen (1988), women who were unemployed and living in poverty in the 1980's were often prone to feelings of suicide. In her sample, Carlen found that many would 'frequently talk of attempted suicides' and accidental overdoses'. As one of her interviewees recalled:

How I feel at the moment? It wouldn't bother me if I dropped dead tomorrow.

Searching for an explanation, however, Carlen pointed to the fact that the women in her sample lived completely

meaningless lives as a consequence of unemployment - induced poverty. This, she argued, led directly to notions of fatalism and despair. As she put it:

Drink, drugs, crime, suicide attempts, or self-mutilation had engraved meaning on what had seemed to be meaningless lives.[52]

In the 1990's, on the other hand, this pattern seems unaltered: studies still suggest that it is men who are more likely than women to actually go through with it. As the **Western Mail** health correspondent, Abbey Wightwick, commented:

Mystifyingly, although young women are less likely than men to actually commit suicide, they are four times more likely to attempt it.[53]

Secondly, there is the link between the rural economy and the rural suicide rate. According to one report in the **Guardian**, Dr Peter Jones of the Institute of Psychiatry claimed that the rate of suicide in the countryside of Wales in 1994 was so high, that it was comparable with inner-city areas. The reason, insisted Dr Jones, related to economic factors as a consequence of substantially reduced Government subsidies which challenged and threatened their livelihoods.[54] Also, in a separate article by Madeleine Bunting, not only had rural suicide rates among the under 25's increased by 71 per cent in the period 1984 - 94, but male suicides were outnumbering females by 4 to 1. Once again, the reason pointed to 'efficiency' and economic factors: it was now a case of 'One chap on a combine harvester instead of a team doing the harvest'.[55] Furthermore, according to the Farmers Union of Wales, Welsh farmers were 87 per cent more likely to attempt suicide than people in other forms of employment. With rural farmers topping the suicide league, isolation and financial pressure were cited as primary causes behind the increase.[56] Finally, a third point concerns the comparison with previous years. Writing in the **Observer**, for example, Dr Louis Appleby asserted that whenever there were periods of exceptional unemployment, suicide cases tended to

increase sharply. The comparison with the inter-war years, he insisted, was quite an obvious feature:

Periods of high unemployment also tend to be times when suicide is relatively common - the early 1930's being the clearest example.[57]

Begging

The problem of begging increasingly emerged as a focus of concern in the 1990's. In the columns of newspapers, reports suggested that begging in South Wales was of widespread proportions which, by 1995, was increasingly attributed to the recession, homelessness, poverty and unemployment. In the late Nineties, too, when unemployment was, according to official figures, declining, begging was still regarded as an everyday problem linked to social exclusion and unemployment. Furthermore, in spite of 'targeting' and 'various 'crackdowns' by the police, it was a problem that was clearly giving Wales a bad image.[58] As the **Western Mail** pointed out on the eve of the 1998 European Summit:

The homeless and those begging on streets, sadly, have become a part of everyday life in Wales...People begging for money outside Cardiff Central Station may not be the first impression Wales wants to make when the city opens itself up to the European Union.[59]

However, the existence of begging on such a scale in Wales was no reason to 'wallpaper it over'. On the contrary, claimed the report, this was the manifest reality of poverty in a Principality where work and opportunity had been denied to a generation. For that reason:

Europe's leaders should see the problem of poverty and homelessness for what it is - one that everybody has a responsibility to face and help overcome.[60]

According to Julianna Hughes, Chairwoman of Dinefwr Liberal Democrats, begging in the Nineties had moved to the forefront of people's attentions. It was, she claimed, not

just widespread across the region, but a 'visible' phenomenon. As she insisted:

We need not go very far to see young people huddled in sleeping bags and begging in shop doorways...More and more people are finding that they cannot afford to pay rents because their benefits are so low.[61]

In the streets, towns and cities generally, the issue was also intensely political. As Leader of the Opposition, Tony Blair, MP, commented:

We need to tackle the reasons why these people are sleeping on the streets, why they're homeless or why they're begging.[62]

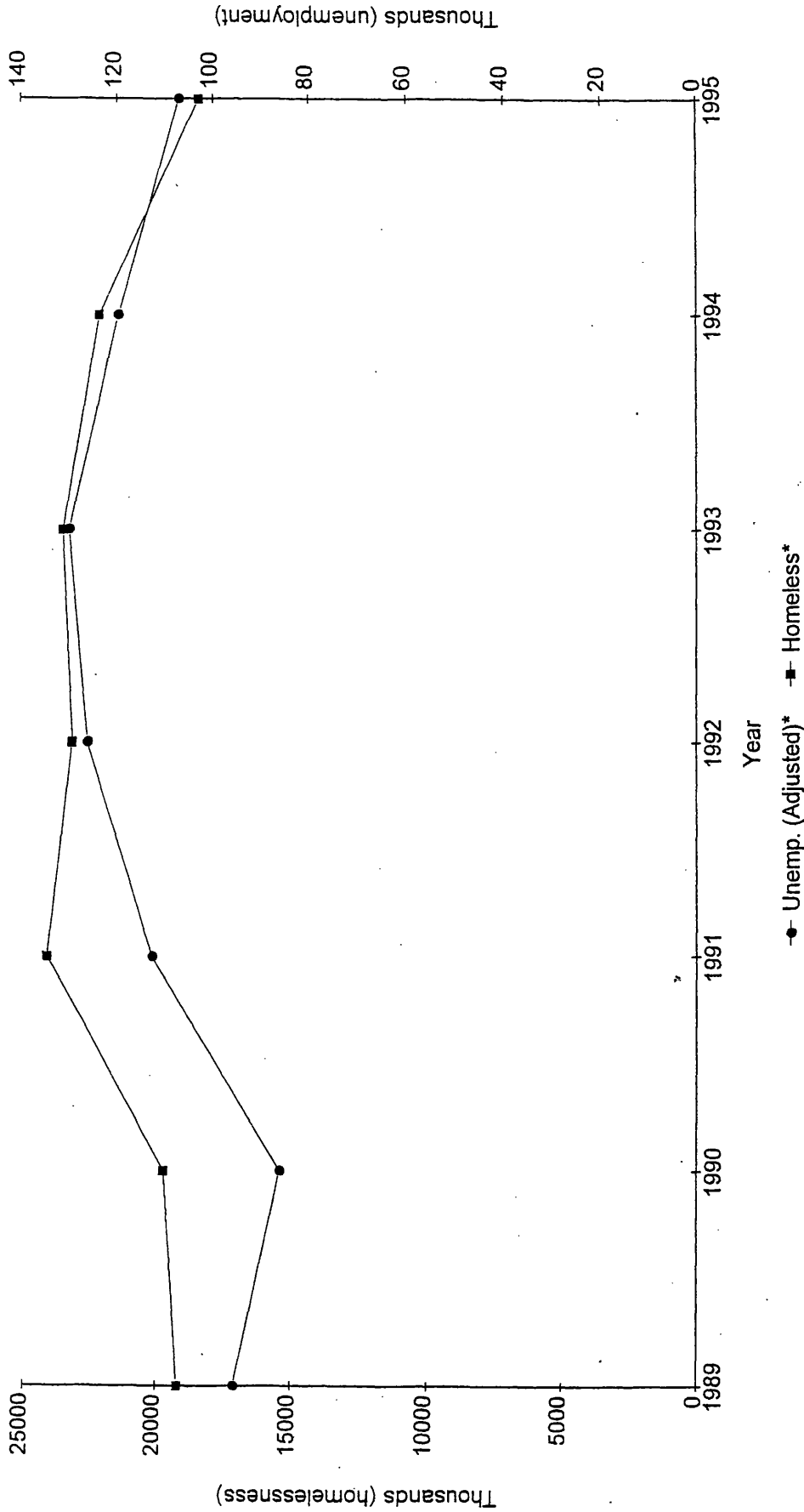
Specifically in Wales, Shelter Cymru Director, Chris Holmes, also commented that the problem should be regarded as something of a political priority because it was simply intolerable in a modern world. He insisted that the only way to begin to re-integrate the socially excluded was to tackle the problem head-on by looking at the underlying causes and a whole range of issues such as housing and employment.[63]

Statistically, the figures for those who were deemed to be homeless and/or existing on the streets were depressing. In the **Western Mail** in 1995, for instance, a spokesman for Shelter Cymru Wales suggested that the problem was reminiscent of a 'Dickens Classic'. Across the Principality, claimed the article, some 60,000 were classed as homeless and by no means was it just an inner city problem: rural areas were experiencing similar problems.[64] According to Welsh Office figures published in **Wales On Sunday** in December 1996, some 18,000 were still officially classed as homeless in South Wales alone - many of whom would be living off the streets. One of the worst hit areas, stated the report, was in and around the traditional mining areas of mid-Glamorgan where 4,450 were homeless. Here, too, life expectancy for those on the streets rarely reached beyond 42.[65] Graph 5.6 overleaf gives some indication of the correlation between homelessness and unemployment in Wales.

In some newspaper articles, reports of begging incidents

Graph 5.6

Unemployment and Homelessness
Wales (Accepted Cases)



Government Statistical Service: **Welsh Housing Statistics**, Welsh Office, Cardiff: HMSO, October 1997, p.60

Government Statistical Service: **Digest of Welsh Statistics**, Welsh Office, Cardiff: HMSO, 1996, p.126

*[Male & Female]

involving women and children were clearly disturbing. In one incident involving an eight-year-old child begging on the streets of Swansea, the report in the **South Wales Evening Post** caused considerable outrage. Under the headline 'Girl, 8, Forced To Beg For Food', the article described how a young child and her two-year-old brother were systematically turned out onto the streets by parents described to be living in hopeless circumstances.[66] In response, a letter to 'Postbox' by D. Lowell asserted that such a practice was 'a sad reflection on our society that this sort of abuse can go on unnoticed for so long'. Somewhat unsympathetically, Mr Lowell also insisted that such incidents were clearly criminal and therefore must be treated harshly by the authorities because it was, quite simply, 'neglect'. As he put it:

I cannot believe that despite the conditions this girl and her two year-old brother were found in, the parents were only imprisoned for 6 months, and yet we were told this was unusual in such cases of neglect. The word neglect does not go far enough to describe this crime.[67]

In another incident, a report in the **Western Mail** under the heading 'Women Beggars Probe' described how two women with their children in tow went begging in the affluent Derwen Fawr district of Swansea. The two women, both described to be aged about 30 and also pushing a very small baby in a pram, canvassed the area knocking on doors and claiming that they were destitute, had no money, no benefits and no work.[68] Nevertheless, in spite of these reports and in an effort to understand, the criminologist, Pat Carlen, insisted that during periods of high unemployment such incidents were not that uncommon. Rather, they formed part of a familiar pattern initiated at a young age and in environments where poverty and unemployment had survivalist connotations. As she put it:

More young women either coming out of residential care or leaving families too poverty-stricken themselves to keep unemployed teenagers are turning to a street life of begging.[69]

The investigative journalist, Nick Davies, was of similar conviction. He insisted that in areas where unemployment and poverty were rife, such as on the poor, run-down council estates, begging was very much a part of a 'shadow world'; a world where 'there were no jobs' and 'begging for money at bus stops' was a regular, daily ritual for those living on the margins of society.[70]

In high unemployment areas, the problem of begging often became a source of considerable annoyance for the police. At Caerphilly, for instance, begging was reported to have become a constant nuisance for Gwent Police who launched various crackdowns on the town centre. In an article in the **South Wales Echo**, begging was listed as a prominent offence amongst a number of other property-related crimes associated with adjacent estates such as Lansbury, Bedwas and Abertridwr. Nevertheless, in his address to Caerphilly Town Council, Inspector Alan Thomas of Gwent Police was blatant in his promise that more police officers would be deployed on the beat to curb begging in the town centre. In an effort to reassure complainants, Inspector Thomas stressed that 'the Police will continue to tackle begging'.[71] At nearby Cardiff, and further west at Swansea, reports on begging provided an insight into those who had recourse to it, as well as giving some idea of the impact of the problem on public emotions. In **Wales On Sunday**, for instance, one individual known as 'Husky' (29) described how begging, drugs and a 'life of crime' were all part of a vicious circle. Being homeless and living on the streets, he stressed how not having a job or a home meant that a daily struggle for survival - between life and death - was a constant, daily reality. Describing himself as one of the 'socially excluded', he elaborated on the 'typical' scenario for those surviving on the streets:

If there are people around, many try to beg for money. But if not, there is nothing to do. We don't have a schedule like most people. We're too busy trying to survive.[72]

On the other hand, for those who came into contact with

beggars the experience was often traumatic, albeit in a different way. For instance, on one such occasion, David Gittens of Bristol was so appalled by the scale of begging following his visit to Cardiff, that he immediately aired his concerns in **Wales On Sunday**. Obviously moved by the experience, he complained:

I should have thought that the most appalling thing is that there is a need for begging in our country today, in what are considered to be enlightened times.[73]

At Swansea, shoppers were similarly disturbed on a number of occasions when they encountered large numbers of people begging in the city centre. For example, in the **South Wales Evening Post** under the heading 'Police Targeting Beggars', members of the public flooded the police with complaints about 'aggressive' begging; urging Swansea police to deploy more officers on the beat as a matter of priority to allay public fears.[74] Almost a year later, however, police 'crackdowns' on begging were still being publicised in the press following complaints that the problem persisted in being of considerable proportions in Swansea.[75]

One of the most progressive responses to the begging problem was the introduction of **The Big Issue**, a topical magazine sold directly to members of the public by homeless, unemployed people. According to Dafydd Elis-Thomas, a trustee of Big Issue Cymru, the introduction of **The Big Issue** in Wales meant that a lifeline had been thrown to many unemployed, homeless individuals who had reached the margins of their existence. In many ways, and for that reason, he said, the magazine was a 'last chance' opportunity: it also sanitized the problem and made it more acceptable by giving 'sellers' a degree of dignity. As he put it:

I have been very impressed over the years by the growth of The Big Issue as a practical way of providing people with the opportunity to train and re-skill themselves by becoming sales people..The magazine is sold on the streets by unemployed people who get a percentage of the cover price.[76]

Members of the public, too, were of exactly the same opinion.

In a letter to the **Western Mail** by Julia James of Baglan, Port Talbot, **The Big Issue** had indeed sanitized the problem of begging in Wales when she claimed that '**Big Issue** selling is not begging'. [77] In the South Wales Echo, a letter from L. Hewlett of Rhymney, Cardiff, echoed these views still further by pointing out that **The Big Issue** was a progressive initiative in Wales, even though the reasons for its existence were strangely 'bitter-sweet'. Commenting on **The Big Issue** sellers in the capital, the letter insisted that 'Surely everyone in a civilised society is entitled to a decent home and a job with a living wage.' [78] Perhaps inevitably, some viewed the debate in a broader and slightly different light. For instance, as Paul Groves, a reporter for the **Western Mail** pointed out, homelessness and begging carried the burden of 'social cost'. Under the headline 'Link Between Homelessness, Crime and Unemployment', Groves asserted that the social cost of the problem was an important issue because it encroached into other areas of society, but particularly in terms of its irrefutable link with 'crime and unemployment'. [79]

Shoplifting

In keeping with reports linking unemployment, poverty and deprivation with suicide and begging, shoplifting was another offence that featured prominently in the 1990's. Once again, various articles suggested a link with the pattern of female unemployment where, it seemed, poverty was the impetus behind many cited incidents. Nick Davies, for instance, identified shoplifting as one of the 'normal crimes of survival' that women, particularly on the run-down estates, seemed to be drawn towards - often in gangs. As he confirmed of the 'Girls' Gang' in his study of Hyde Park Estate:

They did a lot of thieving, mostly shoplifting...The Girls' Gang didn't do burglary and twocking [car theft]. [80]

At Penrhys Estate, Rhondda, Nick Danziger reached a similar

conclusion based, as it was, on the simplest of motives relayed to him through interview. As one woman recalled:

I gotta survive, that's why I shoplift. I've got two kids to feed.[81]

In 1994, a survey of 54,000 companies in England and Wales (90 per cent of traders) by the British Retail Consortium revealed that over the period of the recession, shoplifting had become something of an epidemic. As Keith Ackroyd, Chairman of the Consortium, put it, shoplifting was now 'one of the most serious and costly problems faced by the retail industry'. Furthermore, Ackroyd's concerns were not over-stated given that the latest findings revealed that shoplifting was costing retailers a staggering £2 billion per year.[82] Nevertheless, according to Stephen Box, a sociologist familiar with issues relating to crime and unemployment, this pattern was all too familiar. In the recession of the 1980's, he found that unemployment was the most important factor behind women turning to the 'conventional' crime of shoplifting. The reason, he said, was to do with women becoming increasingly 'economically marginalised' as a consequence of the recession.[83] The criminologist, Pat Carlen, was of the same accord. In her study of 39 women offenders, Carlen discovered that 67 per cent had 'at least one conviction involving shoplifting'. The reason, insisted Carlen, was that shoplifting was considered to be an 'easy' way to obtain money. As she put it:

I call it the 'sod it syndrome' - at those times when women on the margins saw crime as the best method of both solving their financial problems and getting some control over their lives. Property crime was chosen because certain types (e.g. shoplifting and cheque fraud) were seen to be so 'easy'.[84]

Insisting that shoplifting was predominantly part of the female pattern of crime, Carlen's interview with 'Tricia', aged 17, was also a fairly typical illustration of how the offence became 'cyclical'. As she recalled:

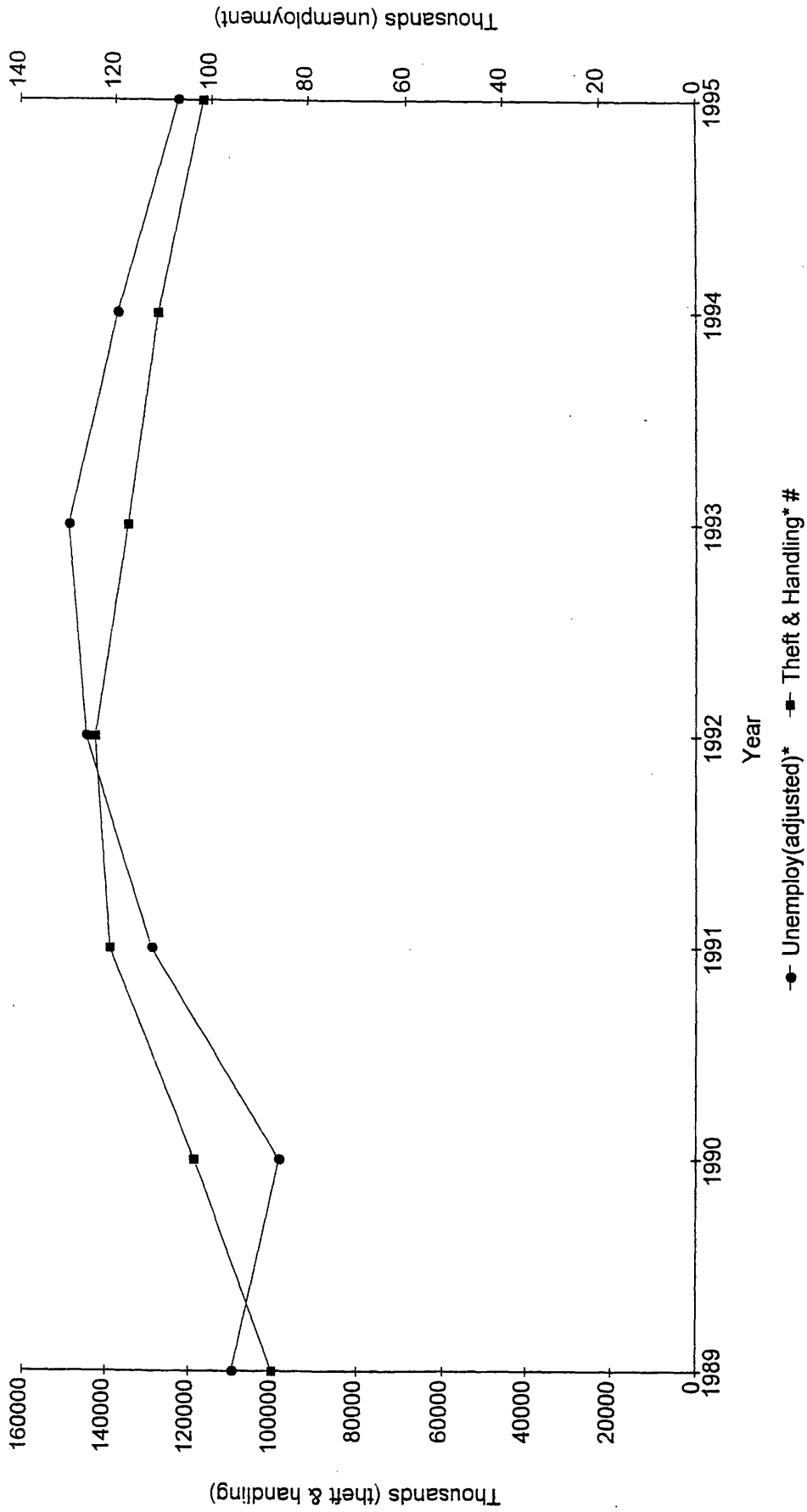
She intended to find a job. In the event of not obtaining employment she would return to shoplifting.

In this way, intimidated Carlen, shoplifting became a form of alternative employment.[85]

Certain newspapers across the South Wales region highlighted numerous cases of apprehended individuals and, in so doing, something of the nature and circumstance of the persons involved in the offence were disclosed. For instance, there was the report in the **South Wales Evening Post** on Yvonne Ley (18) of Bonymaen, Swansea. Appearing in Court in 1990, Ley was described as a notorious shoplifter who, because she was unemployed and needed to support her two-year-old child, could see no alternative means of survival: she was poor and desperate, claimed her Defence. Pleading guilty to the theft of a raincoat, Ley acknowledged that she was awaiting further proceedings at Cardiff, and three at Neath - from where she had been banned from going - all involving shoplifting offences. Of her criminal career, Prosecutor Gareth Lloyd-Jones commented that 'Her record is quite appalling'.[86] Perhaps not surprisingly, 16 months later Ley was once again before the Court. Convicted of multiple shoplifting incidents, the nature of which appeared under the headline 'City Woman Shoplifted For A Living', Ley explained that her circumstances were such that crime in the form of shoplifting was her only employment. As she acknowledged: 'It's my occupation, isn't it.' In reply, however, Mr Justice John Diehl, QC, showed understanding and certainly some leniency by stating, 'I'm going to give you a chance to be assessed but I've got misgivings'.[87] In another report, the exploits of Bonita Tracey Penny (24), also of Swansea, were brought to the attention of the public. Described as living in desperate circumstances with no means of employment, the Court heard how Penny went on a shoplifting spree to Tesco. Clearly unable to buy anything in the store, Penny was reported to the police having been spotted stealing items of food.[88] In 1991, another report under the headline 'Jobless Single Mum Stole Food', outlined the case of Jayne Louise Ware (25) of Mayhill, Swansea.

Graph 5.7

Theft and Handling Stolen Goods
Wales



*[Male & Female] # [recorded]

Government Statistical Service: Digest of Welsh Statistics, Welsh Office, Cardiff: HMSO, 1996, pp.38-9 & 126

Described as an 'unemployed single mother', Ware admitted a series of shoplifting charges at Boots and Safeway. In her defence, Ware explained her motives and personal circumstances thus:

I haven't got a job. I took the food because I was starving. I took the earrings because I haven't had anything nice for myself in years.

Acting in Ms Ware's Defence, Mr. Tony John also pointed out to the Court that her behaviour was entirely motivated by her current circumstances from which she could see no escape. He commented that 'Ware was caring for a small child and was very short of money'. Nevertheless, for the offence the Court was suitably lenient and imposed a 12-month conditional discharge.[89]

While shoplifting could be construed as being largely a female crime, reports suggested that males were becoming increasingly pre-occupied with the offence in the Nineties. With that in mind, Graph 5.7 gives some idea of the pattern of shoplifting (incorporated under the appropriate classification of 'theft and handling stolen goods') and its relationship to unemployment. In terms of motives, however, these were identical to the female pattern and frequently included reference to poverty and unemployment. To illustrate the point, a number of cases in the press provide clues about the 'environment' and the circumstances in which the offences were committed. For instance, under the heading 'Shoplifter Stole Jeans', a report in the **South Wales Evening Post** described the case of Graham Chilcott of Brynmill, Swansea. Pleading guilty to the theft of clothing from Debenhams in Swansea, unemployed Chilcott explained to the Judge that his circumstances were so poor that his offence was a necessity. Receiving a fine of £45, and stating to the Court that he was sorry for what he had done, he added:

I didn't go into town with the intention of stealing. The jeans were for myself but I couldn't afford to buy them.[90]

Another example was a case involving unemployed Mark Anthony

Harling. Under the heading 'Hard-up Dad Stole Presents', the report described, somewhat sadly, how Harling resorted to shoplifting in a bid to acquire food for his family. In addition, Harling's solicitor explained that her client could see no other way of obtaining presents for his family at Christmas. Having been fined £80 for the theft of food and other gift items, Suzanne Thomas, defending, said:

He resorted to shoplifting to get presents. He now realises it was foolish and apologises.[91]

In the period 1989 - 97, various 'crackdowns' were initiated by the police in an effort to curb spiralling offences of shoplifting. In relation to the pattern or trend, the effect was to move the offence outwards into other areas away from the two major cities of the region. In Swansea, for instance, Divisional Commander, Winston Price, said that such initiatives were to be welcomed as a success in lowering shoplifting rates in the town centres, particularly 'if you judge it by the number of people arrested and the amount of property recovered'. However, far more worrying, he said, was the impact of this on other areas: campaigns and 'crackdowns' often having the undesirable effect of moving criminals on into other areas such as Llanelli, Neath and Port Talbot.[92] Another worrying trend was that of violent shoplifting. In a statement released by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW), it was claimed that shoplifters were now no longer prepared to be discreet in their methods; they were now openly violent in the course of their acts. According to Area Organiser (South Wales), Pauline Russ, shoplifting had not only increased significantly, but the trend was noticeably towards the intimidation of shopworkers and physical violence. Such a change, she argued, meant that workers lived in constant fear of attack. As she declared:

This has become an important issue for USDAW as we are seeing an escalation in the use of violence against our members. They deal directly with the public and are increasingly facing aggressive or violent behaviour, particularly from shoplifters. They may be sworn at,

threatened, and even attacked physically...Incidents like these are happening all the time. Crime has become a hazard for many workers.[93]

Attitudes, Fears and the Crimes of Youth

The fall in aggregate levels of unemployment by the mid 1990's coincided with a decline in the figures of crime. Across South Wales, all divisional forces returned diminishing levels of criminal activity in their Annual Reports - especially for property-related crime.[94] In the columns of newspapers, too, falling levels of crime were noted both in a literary and statistical sense. In 1994, for instance, **The Times** expressed great optimism over figures showing that crimes against property had fallen by 6 per cent; vehicle crime by 9 per cent; and thefts by 8 per cent. Burglaries and vehicle crime, claimed the report, had witnessed the largest fall in five years since the beginning of the recession.[95] In Wales generally, the declining figures were also welcomed. In **Wales On Sunday** in 1995, for instance, the drop in vehicle crime by 10 per cent was especially well received because it symbolised 'a significant move in the right direction'.[96] At the eastern end of the region at Gwent, figures released in the **South Wales Echo** for 1994-5 and under the heading 'Crime Is On Way Down', revealed a fall in total crime by 23.8 per cent, whilst detection rates had simultaneously increased by 8.9 per cent. In areas of the county where crime had been at a much higher level in recent years, such as Blackwood, EbbwVale, Pontypool and Newport, Detective Superintendent Lindsay Bennett was pleased to remark:

We are seeing the best of both worlds: a fall in crime and a much higher detection rate.[97]

To the west, city centre offences in Swansea were also plummeting. In the **South Wales Echo**, statistics for the period 1995-6 indicated that burglary of commercial premises had fallen by 20.6 per cent; theft from cars by 38 per cent;

and vehicles stolen by 16 per cent. Correspondingly, a police statement announced a welcome return to a 'feel-safe factor' in the city.[98]

According to an article in 1994 by Stewart Tendler of **The Times**, recent findings published in the **British Crime Survey** suggested that crime was not falling, but was still rising. He pointed out that the reason for the discrepancy between the police figures and the findings of researchers had a lot to do with members of the public being afraid to report crimes when they occurred. One reason for this, he added, may be the fear of increased insurance premiums in the wake of a break-in or theft. As he put it:

[there is] a growing reluctance to report crime to the authorities, which may be linked to higher insurance premiums.[99]

At the same time, a number of admissions were made that police chiefs had, on occasion, been 'cuffing' the figures downwards to make them appear more favourable.[100] In Wales in 1996, one correspondent writing in the **South Wales Echo** was also convinced that the trend was still moving in the wrong direction, when he insisted:

To claim that we have one of the fastest falling crime rates we have seen for years beggars belief.[101]

Likewise, chief statistician at the Home Office, Chris Nuttall, insisted that in spite of the fall in aggregate crime figures, it 'would be [too] daring to say that crime was cracked'. Moreover, crime was a complicated issue: falling levels of criminal activity 'could not be attributed just to the improved economy in recent years', he said.[102] Nevertheless, in spite of dissenting views over the figures of crime, a number of sources suggested that the real issue surrounding criminality in the Nineties was 'crime-fear'.

In the first half of the 1990's, a salient feature of reporting was that the fear of crime became an *a priori* concern. According to a number of commentators, the coincidence between high levels of unemployment and high

levels of property offending had meant that crime fear had reached intolerable levels. In the **Guardian**, for instance, Labour leader, John Smith, MP, asserted that the fear of crime had reached a crescendo because people had endured yet another Tory recession. As a consequence, he said, many people had been deprived of meaningful work and opportunity and had begun to turn inward by attacking their own communities. As he insisted:

They have seen too often their jobs destroyed, people made homeless, youngsters denied opportunity. They worry, and no wonder they worry, that our society is coming apart, that our very sense of community is being undermined. And they worry that the crime on our streets and in our homes is spiralling out of control.[103]

In the same year, the then Shadow Home Affairs spokesman, Tony Blair, MP, pointed out that crime-fear was probably the main issue of the day alongside unemployment. As he put it:

Other than unemployment it is probably the main issue today. Elderly people are afraid, not just of going out, but of staying in their own house at night. Young people are afraid of being assaulted and abused when they go with their friends for a night out. If you are a home owner or a car owner the chances are that you will have suffered a burglary or a car theft. This dramatically affects the ordinary civil liberties of people.[104]

Furthermore, concern was such that an Inspectorate of Constabulary report in 1992 acknowledged that chief police officers were becoming increasingly sensitive to the heightened fear of crime amongst the general public. Moreover, the report insisted that something had to be done as a matter of urgency to allay public concerns:

We must strive to reduce the fears of the public and, so far as we can, to reflect their priorities in the action we take.[105]

One such response was 'zero tolerance'; an initiative successfully pioneered on the streets of New York. In the mid to late Nineties, with a General Election imminent, the newly appointed Shadow Home Affairs spokesman, Jack Straw,

and Leader of the Opposition, Tony Blair, were clear that rising levels of crime-fear and lawlessness would be intolerable under a Labour Government. Whilst it would be too early to assess the precise impact of Labour's subsequent victory under the banner of 'Tough on Crime; Tough on the Causes of Crime', the idea of 'zero tolerance' did have its political advocates - especially as a solution to public fears about rising crime on the estates and on the streets of England and Wales. However, as BBC Crimewatch presenter, Nick Ross, pointed out, 'zero tolerance' is 'often misunderstood'. It does not, he insisted, mean:

..jackbooted police officers dragging vagrants off the streets or sending shoplifters to the gallows. But it does mean making the community feel safe and making the streets feel like our streets, so that we intervene when we see something wrong.[106]

A year after the election, Jack Straw once again argued the case for the introduction of 'zero tolerance'. Under the headline 'Straw Re-Affirms Commitment to Zero Tolerance', the Home Secretary insisted that the Government's case in favour of 'zero tolerance' had never been stronger. In the wake of the **British Crime Survey**, which endorsed the strategy as a means of curbing crime in 'incivil neighbourhoods' across England and Wales where crime-fear was at a premium, Straw argued:

The essence of 'zero tolerance' is that anti-social activity, acts of vandalism and rowdy, loutish behaviour should not be tolerated because they severely damage the quality of people's lives and lead on, if unchecked, to much more serious criminal behaviour.

Furthermore, critical of 'aggressive beggars, winos and squeegee merchants', the strategy would be an important part of the Government's future crime prevention plans. As he concluded:

A 'zero tolerance' strategy will be an integral part of the Government's plans for tackling incivility and disorder.[107]

Some commentators viewed the issue of crime-fear in a different light. In the opinion of the editor of **The Times**, for example, the media had been largely to blame for fuelling crime-fear in the Nineties. The press, he claimed, had become infatuated by the whole issue of crime and deviancy and thus had encouraged an unhealthy interest amongst the general public. As he put it:

Growing publicity does little to reduce crime but does much to increase public anxiety...Fear of crime that is out of proportion to its true incidence may even be a worse social evil than crime itself.[108]

In complete agreement was Home Office Minister David Maclean who added that 'the fear of crime in many people is worse than the problem itself'.[109] Nevertheless, regardless of headlines and reports, such as appeared in the **Economist**, insisting that Britain in 1993 was 'Engulfed By A Crime Wave', which arguably did little to allay public anxieties, some correspondents argued that crime did, in fact, 'pay'; but not necessarily for criminals.[110] For instance, Simon Jenkins of **The Times** argued in 1994 that the heightened fear of crime in recent years had not entirely been the fault of the press or media. The security industry, he pointed out, played a significant role because, quite simply, crime-fear translated into cash. As he declared:

Fear has become a marketable commodity, like sex. It is used to sell personal alarms, car phones, video systems, steel grilles. It promotes right-wing politicians, sells newspapers, redesigns blocks of flats. Fear is big money. If crime fell, I bet this industry would make sure fear continued to rise.[111]

Even more worrying was a claim made in an earlier report in 1991 insisting that, when it came to the issue of women and fear, the security industry had virtually granted itself a licence to print money:

Security, and women's security in particular, is big business - one of the fastest growing in the country.[112]

In South Wales, a survey of the Cadoxton/Barry area in 1995 betrayed findings which provided some clues about the level of crime-fear. Reported in the **South Wales Echo**, the survey revealed that out of 1,000 people questioned, 90 per cent were 'very' worried about the general crime problem; 45.6 per cent were fearful of the activities of joyriders; and 45 per cent claimed that they had recently been victims of crime. Commenting on the findings, Cadoc Ward councillor, Fred Johnson, was clearly dismayed:

These results don't surprise me. They confirm my worst fears. I asked for this survey because of concerns by residents about burglaries, car crime and assaults. Crime and the fear of it is worse in Cadoxton than in most other areas.[113]

Furthermore, Johnson hinted that the underlying cause may well be linked to the high level of joblessness in the area, especially amongst youths, when he added that 'the area also suffers from high unemployment'.[114] At the same time, interviews with 74 persistent young offenders by the Policy Studies Institute affirmed that the high level of youth unemployment was indeed an important factor underpinning their involvement in crime. As Tim Newburn and Ann Hagell reported:

The majority had left school, and had nothing to do with their time, not being employed or in training or studying.[115]

Nevertheless, at nearby Llandaff, there were similar concerns expressed by residents at Barry;[116] whilst at Ely, as discussed previously, inhabitants had remained consistently fearful of crime following the riotous scenes in 1991, when a report in the **South Wales Echo** recalled how:

Heavy unemployment, few leisure facilities, and a lot of resentment exploded during the summer riots of 1991.

Perceptively, Joan Hughes, secretary of Ely Residents Association, considered that crime had simply become more violent in recent years. This was, she believed, the reason

why people were so afraid. As she put it:

I think crime has become more violent. That's one of the reasons why people are so afraid and why they need to know that the police are looking out for their interests.[117]

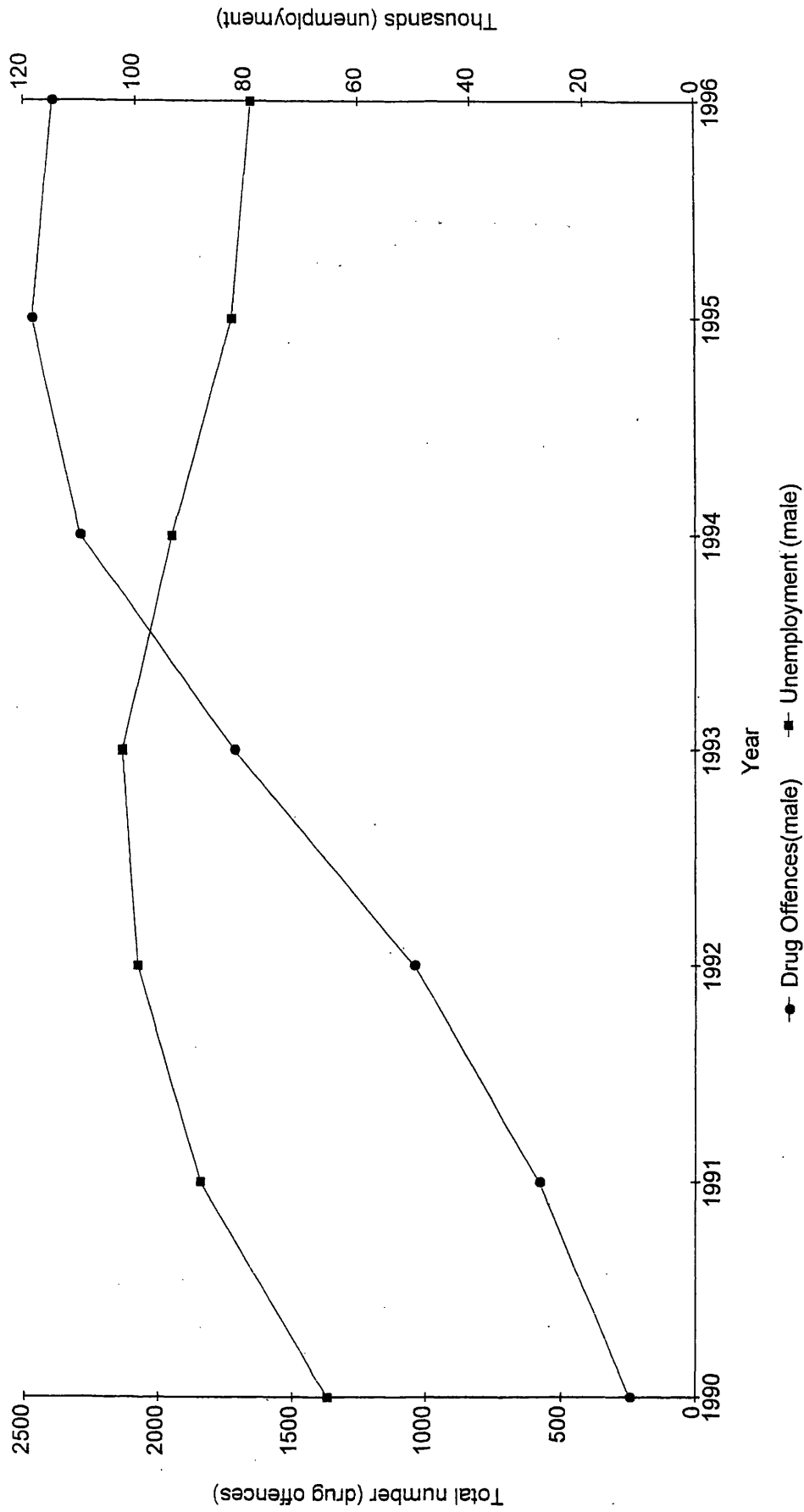
In a Mori Poll conducted in 1994, it was revealed that the general public in England and Wales were particularly fearful of two things: redundancy and crime. With regard to offending, however, drugs, criminal damage, car-crime and offences against property were among a list of crimes believed to be causing the most anxiety.[118] Furthermore, in a separate Harris Poll of 1,323 people conducted over a two-year-period, 45 per cent of those interviewed in Wales aged between 7 and 19 claimed that drugs caused them the most concern and anxiety. This was closely followed by a fear of redundancy/unemployment (27 per cent) and violence/crime (20 per cent). According to Welsh Liberal Democrat, Alex Carlisle, MP, such findings were indicative of a significant problem. As he stated:

The survey showed that drugs were a significant problem among young people in Wales. It is vitally important that schools and police address this problem before it becomes endemic.[119]

In South Wales, offences relating to 'criminal damage' (vandalism), drugs and violent crime were a feature of various sources - especially the press. Repeatedly, these sources built up a picture of the crime pattern across the region. For instance, in 1995, a report in a leading Welsh newspaper highlighted what was described as the 'frightening extent' of the drugs problem. In essence, the report described how drugs were responsible for destroying many traditional communities - especially in the Valleys. Furthermore, it was strongly asserted that unemployment was inextricably linked to the entire drugs issue because it engendered a sense of hopelessness from which many youths simply wanted to escape. Youths, particularly in areas of high unemployment, quickly acquired an attitude of

Graph 5-8

Drug Offences: Persons Cautioned Wales



Government Statistical Service: Digest of Welsh Statistics, Welsh Office, Cardiff: HMSO, 1997, pp. 40 & 126

despondency and fatalism tempered only by the relief offered by drugs. Referring to research findings, the article in **Wales On Sunday** asserted:

An alarming report published yesterday suggested that children as young as 12 in areas of high unemployment no longer see a future for themselves. Such a sense of hopelessness provides a telling explanation for the addicts who escape into a drug-induced world of unreality. Society, and more specifically, the Government, has an urgent responsibility to restore hope to our beleaguered communities.[120]

Moreover, the same article also described the cost of the problem to communities in terms of criminal activity. In Wales, a heroin user may need to find £100 per day and, to raise this amount by theft, goods worth six times as much needed to be stolen: in a year this amounted to £200,000-worth of goods stolen by one heroin user.[121] Furthermore, a joint study of 1,000 drug users in England and Wales by the Institute of Psychiatry and the National Addiction Centre, revealed that the cost to the criminal justice system in terms of actual crime generated was 'around £7.5 million a year'. However, the study also identified that 'a lack of a permanent address and unemployment were important factors' in understanding the drug problem and the reasons for its prevalence throughout the Nineties.[122]

According to a report by Abbie Wightwick of the **Western Mail**, the drugs issue in Wales was clearly linked to high levels of unemployment. Referring to the conclusions of 'Drug Prevention Week Wales', Wightwick reported the views of senior drug counsellors, such as Phil Hulme of Rhymney Valley Drug Aid, who was clear that the underlying cause of drug abuse was likely to be unemployment. As he put it:

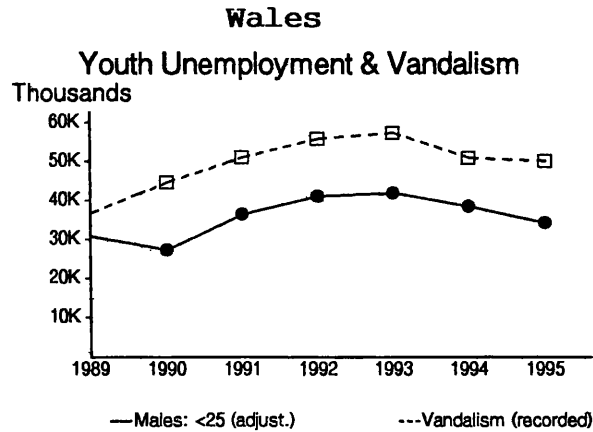
Drug use is escalating across Wales and escalating disproportionately in mid-Glamorgan. This is probably because of high unemployment, particularly in the Valleys, and boredom...One of the most important ways to help people using drugs is to understand the environment in which they take them.[123]

In complete agreement was Lorraine Jones of Tonyrefail. With

three of her four sons addicted to drugs, she claimed in a television documentary, **Wales This Week**, that drugs were a much bigger menace in the Valleys than people realised. Ever since the mines had closed, she said, drugs had increasingly become a means of escape for youngsters who saw little hope for their futures. For that reason, she added, the profile of drugs in terms of awareness should be raised so that ordinary people became much more attuned to what was now happening, and would continue to happen, in their communities.[124] In a separate report published in the **Western Mail**, Jones reiterated her views and insisted that many communities in the Valleys were struggling with the nightmare of drugs and the environment in which their abuse tended to thrive.[125] However, as some commentators have pointed out, a lot depended on how you looked at the issue.[126] Nevertheless, the 'Drugs Czar', Chief Constable Hellowell, reiterated the view that drugs posed a 'damaging' threat to communities. He pointed out that some 50 per cent of burglaries and robberies were directly attributable to the need to find money for drugs; but the truly sad aspect of this, he claimed, was that 'We have lost a generation'.[127]

Apart from fears and anxieties expressed in relation to drugs, the offence of 'criminal damage' or vandalism did little to abate public concerns about the perceived decline in social normalcy. Statistically, this was quite understandable given the close correlation between the pattern of unemployment and offences of vandalism:

Graph 5.9



Government Statistical Service: **Digest of Welsh Statistics**, Welsh Office, Cardiff: HMSO (1996) pp. 38-9 & 127.

For those involved with law and order, vandalism began to make an impact towards the end of 1989. In the Annual Report of the chief constable for South Wales, for instance, Chief Constable Lawrence agreed with his divisional superintendants that vandalism had suddenly seemed to gain momentum. In Cardiff Central, for example, criminal damage had surged by 30 per cent in less than one year, leaving Chief Constable Lawrence with the conclusion that those who were responsible simply had nothing else in their lives to occupy their time. These offences, he said, were being committed by 'bored youngsters who appear to have little direction in their lives'. [128] In the columns of newspapers, reports elsewhere echoed the findings of the police. In 1990, for instance, a report on the community of Ystalyfera revealed that vandalism had reached such proportions, that the community council was being 'swamped' by calls from residents 'protesting' about the need to urgently address the 'high level of vandalism' in the area. [129] In Llanelli, too, there were problems when the town's crime prevention panel noted a staggering increase in this type of offending. Under the heading 'Huge Rise In Damage Cases', the panel commented that 'Criminal Damage cases in Llanelli have leapt by more than 63 per cent this year'. [130] Similarly, and a little further west, church leaders in Carmarthenshire expressed increasing concern at the specific vandalism of church property. Citing incidences ranging from graffiti, arson and the use of air-rifles,

church leaders announced that vandalism was very much 'a crime of the Nineties'. With members of the clergy becoming increasingly fearful for their own safety, the report noted how many of these offences were spawned in the early part of the decade. As the article described:

Attacks on churches and graveyards have risen sharply since the start of the decade and are now known as the crime of the 1990's. Churches across the county are operating under siege conditions.[131]

In another report, this time under the headline 'Churches Hit By Wave Of Crime Put Their Faith In TV Cameras', Lorna Duckworth of the **Express**, commented that the problem of theft and vandalism involving church property was costing an average £10 million a year. The scale of the problem was such, she claimed, that Church of England ministers had organised their first 'anti-crime conference' in collaboration with the police. As she pointed out, this was a nationwide problem:

Church leaders are taking drastic action to combat the £10 million cost of burglary, vandalism and arson. They have teamed up with police forces nationwide to tackle the crime-wave which is stripping Britain of its religious heritage...Church of England ministers this week hold their first anti-crime conference to promote a national network of Church Watch schemes.[132]

In districts where unemployment was considered to be at a high level, such as Townhill in Swansea, vandalism was reported to be of a particularly violent nature; contributing significantly to an already heightened sense of crime-fear in the area. In 1991, for instance, an article on vandalism by Lisa Burrow of the **South Wales Evening Post** revealed an oppressive state of affairs. In the wake of several violent attacks on property by vandals, including violent threats, one resident, Mrs Tina Haley, had clearly reached the limits of tolerance. Following a threat to another resident by one youth to 'burn down your house and burn you in your beds', Mrs Haley said:

I am absolutely petrified, I just want to get out of here. We are all afraid to go to bed at night. They are capable of doing anything.[133]

However, vandalism was not just a problem confined to estates where crime in general was considered to be higher. In areas to the west of Swansea, such as Gowerton, vandalism and residents' fear of it reached a crescendo in 1991. According to Community Council Chairman, Bernard Smith, the rise in reported cases of vandalism was also part of a general pattern of offending against property that was beginning to spiral. As he commented:

Vandalism is a grave problem. It's very disturbing the way crime is growing in Gowerton.[134]

Furthermore, vandalism was also considered to be a costly concern. As West Glamorgan's Deputy Director of Education, Graham Bingham, pointed out, vandalism of school property alone in the county amounted to around £400,000 a year. And, although this was a generic problem in South Wales, he said, this should not 'minimise the obvious concern which we all feel about vandalism'.[135]

The rise in the number of reports relating to vandalism, supported by statistical evidence, led to a number of conclusions. In the main, there emerged a consensus that suggested that many youngsters were merely venting their frustrations on a society that did not seem to care that much. More specifically, David Morris, MEP, asserted in the **Western Mail** that vandalism in South Wales was the physical manifestation of anger expressed by a hapless and impotent generation. As he put it:

They are totally voiceless unless you accept vandalism as being a language, which I do. It's the language of frustration and anger. They have every right to be angry and frustrated...I want the young people to tell us what life is like on the dole, why they turn to crime, drugs and smashing-up areas. Tell us for God's sake. Tell us what the impact of unemployment is on your lives.[136]

Some commentators, such as the Chairwoman of Ynysmeudwy Boys

Club and a Gowerton Scout Group Leader, were of similar accord, but pointed to the fact that youths were growing up in a society where there was 'nothing else to do': they simply had 'little else in their lives' to occupy their time.[137] According to investigative journalist, Nick Davies, all of this was quite understandable when viewed against a background of 'hopelessness', 'despair' and 'no work'. As his research uncovered:

You close down the factories and the other employers so that for a great many men and women there is not only no work, there is also no prospect of work, ever....You cut their dole...you close their youth clubs...And soon, this community will start to destroy itself, as those among it who have abandoned hope turn their anger and indifference on their surroundings. This means that they will destroy not only the physical fabric of the place - by smearing it and smashing it and burning it down - but also the subtle, fragile webs that bind its people together.[138]

Furthermore, writing in the journal **Magistrate** in 1994, Joel Kosminsky had already identified this pattern when he insisted that vandalism was an expression of anger by a generation that had been excluded from work and opportunity. Moreover, he added, vandalism in the Nineties was about making a mark on a world that simply did not care. As he put it:

1990's vandals look for individuality in an uncaring society which has more money than they do...it's also a challenge - 'I'm here, I'll be back.'[139]

Earlier still, in 1993, an article by D. Faulkner, also writing in the **Magistrate**, made the point that if juveniles' minds were more constructively pre-occupied away from criminal damage, this would go a long way to 'avoid creating the conditions which produce it'. This meant addressing a number of issues at a community level, 'including', he said, 'the means of survival in that community'.[140]

For some, the assertion that crimes of vandalism, theft and violence amongst juveniles were somehow to be averted by addressing the social causes was a blatant nonsense. For instance, James Kemp of Mountain Ash, mid-Glamorgan, insisted

that spiralling property offences of this nature amongst juveniles was nothing more than the natural concomitant of 'gutless' and 'pathetic' sentencing. In the **South Wales Echo**, he maintained that the answer was to 'get tough':

Forget blaming unemployment, lack of facilities and poverty, second time offenders and recidivists should be detained for very long periods of time where surroundings during incarceration are less pleasant than the current set-up.[141]

Furthermore, and taking an even harder line, he added:

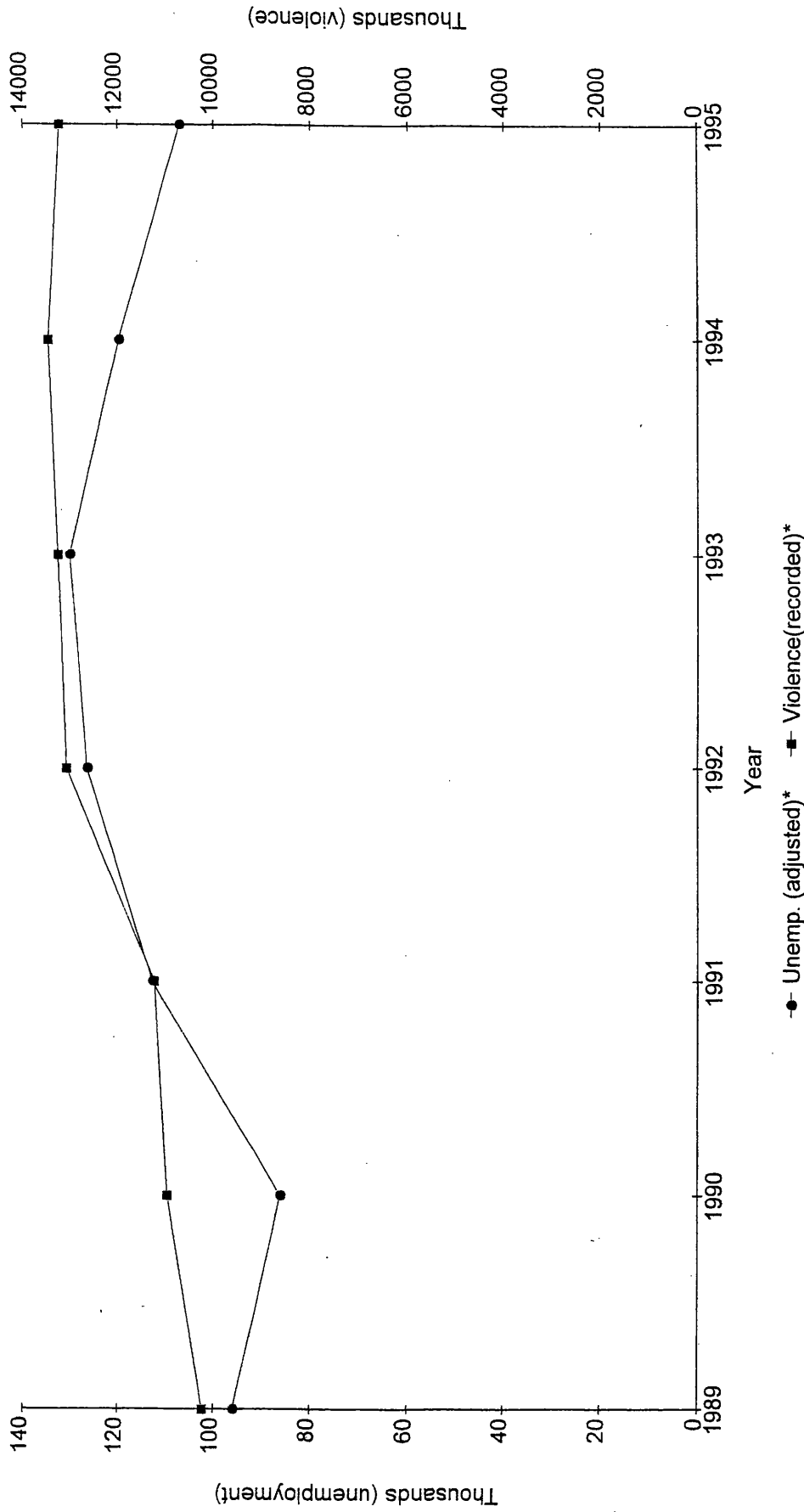
Another sensible idea would be the abolition of benefits for idle people in a system where unemployed persons should be made to do mundane, yet constructive tasks in order to qualify for state hand-outs.[142]

At times the police, too, felt sufficiently moved to prescribe a lower common denominator. As Superintendent Mel Poole of Swansea police advanced with regard to spiralling youth crime: 'What they really need is a good hiding.' [143]

As a sign of growing frustration, less sympathetic reactions to the crime problem in South Wales were perhaps understandable. In the first half of the Nineties, it seemed that not only had property offences increased in line with unemployment, but, to an extent, violent crime also. As we have seen up to this point, the trend towards violence has been a feature of many of the offences committed in the Nineties. Statistically, this feature has also been mirrored by figures which showed that crimes of violence did coincide closely with figures for unemployment in Wales (as indicated by Graph 5.10 overleaf); and, most notably, during the worst years of the recession. Furthermore, an article in **The Times** suggested that the trend towards increasing violence showed little sign of abating in spite of falling offences against property: in the period 1995-97, violent assaults were up by 5 per cent while burglaries had fallen by 12 per cent. The inference being, then, that in England and Wales, society was becoming steadily more violent commensurate with an emerging and aggressive 'culture of violence';[144] individuals and communities far more wary and fearful that violence may be

Graph 5.10

Violence against the Person
Wales



Government Statistical Service: Digest of Welsh Statistics, Welsh Office, Cardiff. HMSO (1996) pp 38-9 & 126 * [Male & Female]

used against them;[145] and the police, not only more concerned for their own personal safety as discussed earlier, but increasingly worried that many communities were 'perceptively defenceless'.[146]

Press commentary and reports on crime provided some clues about the level of the debate generally. In September 1994, for instance, **The Times** reporter, Stewart Tandler, was clearly concerned that violent robbery and muggings had undergone their biggest increase in England and Wales since 1988, to reach a new record of 59,000 offences.[147] In South Wales, the trend towards violent crime was noted as early as 1989, when Judge Huw Williams intimated that based on the evidence of cases coming before him in the Court, violence in Swansea, especially at night, was out of control. Areas such as The Kingsway, he said, had become:

...a ghetto of violence and drunkenness.. a serious problem for the police and a place not visited by law-abiding citizens.[148]

Not far away, in the 'quieter' community of Ystalyfera, reports also emerged suggesting a sudden trend towards crimes of violence and a heightened fear of it. As one resident, Mr Edwards, stated:

There's a fear that people walking at night - and there's a lot of people leaving the rugby club late - could get mugged in the pitch dark...we've got a few bandits round this way.[149]

The increase in offences against property and the higher level of violent crime undoubtedly fuelled public anxieties. For those, particularly on the political Left who believed that much of the offending had 'social roots', evidence based on a sample of the **South Wales Evening Post** for March 1990 (overleaf), does lend a certain amount of credence to their concerns. In the main, the sample shows that the average age of offending for those stated to be unemployed was 27; for those in work the average age was 34; and for both categories the average age was 28. The sample also shows that almost one third of all offences were committed by

Crime Profile - Case Sample
South Wales Evening Post

Table 5.1

Age	Sex	Employment	Offence	Amount/ Value	Punishment
23	M	Unemployed	Burglary	N / A	Sentence Deferred
23	F	Employed	Shoplifting	£100	Remanded (soc.inq.)
27	M	Unemployed	Theft & Deception	£7,000	Adjourned 21 days
16	M	Unemployed	Car Theft	N / A	12 Months Youth Det.
16	M	Unemployed	Car Theft	N / A	Social Inquiry Rep.
18	M	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	£69.80	£20
19	M	Unemployed	Car Theft	N / A	Sentence to be set
17	M	Unemployed	Theft From Cars	£310	12 Months Probation
50	M	Employed	Theft	£370	12 Months Imprison.
48	M	Employed	Theft	£400	12 Months Imprison.
24	M	Unemployed	Theft	£100 <	Remanded
39	F	Employed	Theft	£597.59	Sentence Deferred
27	F	Employed (P/T)	Theft	£230	Deferred (Inqu.)
22	M	Unemployed	Burglary	£1,770	Sentence Deferred
24	F	Unemployed	Shoplifting	£22	£15 + 1 year discharge
18	F	Unemployed	Shoplifting	£179.90	Deferred (soc. Inqu.)
20	M	Employed (P/T)	Burglary	N / A	Community Service
19	M	Employed (P/T)	Theft	£90	£100 + £50 Costs
18	M	Unemployed	Burglary	N / A	120 hours Comm. Serv.
22	F	Unemployed	Criminal Damage	N / A	Bound over £100
20	F	Unemployed	Credit Card Fraud	£419.65	Deferred (Soc. Inqu.)
17	M	Unemployed	Car Theft	N / A	12 Months Prob. + £90
29	M	Unemployed	Burglary	£1500	Sentence Deferred
44	M	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	N / A	£100
32	F	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	N / A	£100
40	F	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	N / A	£100
23	M	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	N / A	£160
19	F	Unemployed	Shoplifting	N / A	£65
50	M	Unemployed	Theft of Food	£5 <	£60
28	M	Unemployed	Burglary	£128	120 hours Comm. Serv.
27	M	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	£300	200 hours Comm. Serv.
45	M	Employed	Credit Card Fraud	N / A	3½ years Imprison.
42	M	Unemployed	Credit Card Fraud	N / A	200 hours Comm. Serv.
27	M	Unemployed	Deception (car)	£2,500	150 hours Comm. Serv.
27	M	Unemployed	Shoplifting	£40	£45 fine
29	M	Unemployed	Cheque Fraud	£2,500	6 Months Imprison.
29	F	Unemployed	Cheque Fraud	£2,500	£1,267 Compensation
46	M	Unemployed	Theft of Food	£10.82	£75 Fine
31	M	Employed	Stealing Wheel Trims	£40 <	Sentence Deferred
28	F	Unemployed	Theft of Food	N / A	£15 + Conditional Dis.
40	M	Employed	Theft From Car	£40 <	Sentence Deferred
50	M	Unemployed	Dole Fraud	£107	£180 Fine

South Wales Evening Post, March 1990 (1 month), Swansea Cenral Library

Not included in sample: drunkenness, road traffic accidents, bankruptcy and suicide.

women. In terms of punishment, the sample highlights that the employed were more likely than the unemployed to be given a prison sentence: out of the four prison sentences illustrated, three were passed on those in employment. Likewise, for the unemployed, the norm was generally either a community service order or a low fine.

The debate on crime and unemployment invited the issue of sentencing and punishment. With that in mind, the views of certain members of the police, as well as the general public, reflected an increasing dissatisfaction with the sentences meted out by the Courts. On the other hand, there also emerged a degree of optimism based on measures which sought to understand the cycle of offending and the pattern which it formed. With regard to the former, the police clearly showed signs of growing impatience with offenders who repeatedly came before the Courts for offences of a similar nature. For instance, on the issue of young offenders and joyriding, Chief Constable Robert Lawrence told the South Wales Police Authority in Swansea that as many as 400 offences were being committed by some offenders while on bail. In response to a comment suggesting that a secure unit would deal with the problem, Chief Constable Lawrence replied that:

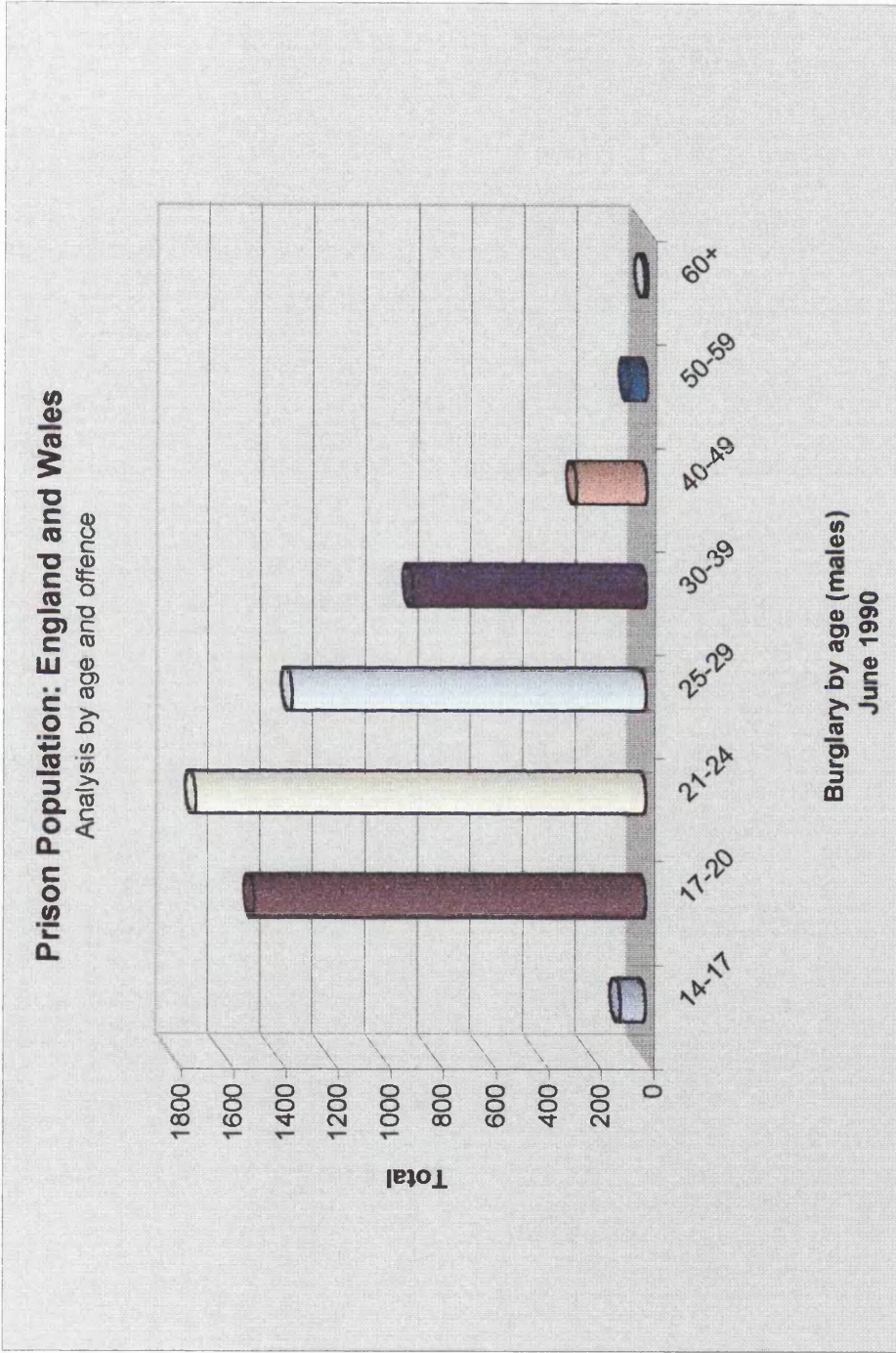
It would be at a cost of £ 4.5 million. But I could fill it in 10 minutes.[150]

Similarly, and under the headline 'Police Welcome Joyrider Sentence', Chief Inspector Jones was relieved that one of Swansea's more notorious car-thieves was off the street and behind bars. As he commented:

We welcome the custodial sentence imposed by the Court...12 months in custody will give him time to reflect on the fact that what he was doing was a criminal offence and highly dangerous.[151]

Furthermore, on the nearby Enterprise Zone, which, according to one report in 1991 was considered to be 'a top target for burglars', traders pleaded for magistrates to 'toughen-up' and 'crack down' on those responsible. In reply, a police spokeswoman reinforced their calls for action by insisting

Graph 5.11 Age profile in 'The University of Crime'



Government Statistical Service: Annual Abstract of Statistics (134) London: HMSO (1998) p.92

Taking persistent offenders out of circulation would reduce crime by only 1.5 per cent, a gain that would be swiftly overtaken by an increase in re-offending as youngsters graduated from the university of crime.[155]

Likewise, the psychologist, Dr. John Talbot pointed out:

While detention could deter some, many simply come out with better 'skills' and a more rebellious attitude.[156]

Guardian correspondent, Sam Westacott, also argued that for those who had experienced non-custodial forms of sentencing the results had clearly been encouraging. Moreover, non-custodial measures had, in effect, re-written the crime pattern throughout the entire county because, 'Ten years of focusing on non-custodial services has produced positive results'.[157]

Crime prevention measures in the Nineties came in many different guises: Neighbourhood Watch, Crimestoppers, or Cardiff's 'Spotlight' campaign, for instance. At the same time, an article in the **Western Mail** suggested that these responses to the growing crime problem had only had a limited impact - especially in places such as the Gurnos. By far the more constructive approaches, continued the article, were those initiatives that dealt much more directly with the offenders themselves.[158] At Port Talbot, for example, one such scheme was the Guiding Hand programme. In 1991, the project coordinators of Guiding Hand disclosed findings, based on monitoring, that re-offending rates amongst youths who had persistently stolen cars was extremely low compared to those who went directly into youth custody. As Hugh Smythe, Guiding Hand manager, put it:

It has to be better than sending them into youth custody, which is a total disaster. In 1989, around 13 or 14 local youngsters were put away for theft of cars. 100 per cent reoffended, so it's obviously not the answer.
[159]

Furthermore, added Smythe:

Some have made real efforts to go straight, with many now in full-time jobs since being on the course. One, a 20 year old Swansea lad named Owen, is shortly joining the Navy after four years of car theft...we try and instil a bit of self-respect and for many of these kids it's sadly lacking.[160]

In another report on the Guiding Hand initiative, one contributor suggested that the success of the scheme had a great deal to do with the fact that offenders were also encouraged to learn about the reasons underpinning their criminal behaviour. The scheme was successful because it promoted 'a sense of responsibility and maturity' and, in that sense, its aims had been truly reformative.[161] Finally, the positive impact of programmes which had shifted the emphasis away from the imprisonment and detention of offenders, caught the attention of **The Times** reporter, Simon Jenkins. In 1994, Jenkins asserted that programmes and schemes which dealt with the causes of criminality were successful because they sought to understand: they were 'oddly sensible'. As he commented:

Perhaps the worm is turning. Perhaps the public is proving more intelligent...perhaps this dark tale contains a golden thread.[162]

In conclusion, the debate on crime and unemployment in the Nineties discloses a pattern of offending which could, appropriately, be characterised as being 'cyclical' in nature; cyclical in the sense that unemployment spawned a cycle of offending - a vicious circle - which fed into desperation and culminated in some form of deviant behaviour. In the opinions of a number of commentators who examined this pattern - from police chiefs through to Home Office researchers and leading academics - there emerged something of a consensus: unemployment and poor social circumstances were, in various ways, linked to rising crime. Overall, the inference was that many of the offences, such as burglary and vehicle crime, were associated with the social environment in which offenders found themselves. According to some, it was

in the poorer districts, where unemployment was consistently high, that crime grew out of a discernible 'unemployment culture', where any hope of opportunity and work was lacking. These offences were, then, the 'natural concomitant' of an excluded strata of society. Others pointed to the fact that crime was also moving outwards, but, more than that, was becoming much more violent and less circumspect as thieves became more daring in their exploits. In comparison to the 1980's, this provides something of a contrast when, as David Jones argued, levels of violent offending declined throughout the decade. Nevertheless, to the churches and city centre traders who, as we have seen, were 'targeted' by thieves, the conclusion was that offending was getting out of hand: the 'crime wave' was suddenly 'rising', they noted.

In terms of the categories examined, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the impact of unemployment. For instance, the evidence suggests that suicide, although technically no longer an offence, was a clear manifestation of the trauma which the experience of unemployment engendered. It was, as Nick Davies pointed out, responsible for inflicting tremendous 'emotional damage' leading directly to an extreme outcome.[163] In South Wales, this 'emotional damage' led to suicide and attempted suicide and was attributed to economic factors. Moreover, in the Valleys especially, it was a problem linked to the closure of the mines and heavy industry. On the streets of most major towns and cities, begging also became a focus of concern. For some, it became something of a political priority: begging was a visible, open phenomenon which, apart from the effect on victims themselves, could, on occasion, be an aggressive and unpleasant experience for members of the public. Consequently, the introduction of **The Big Issue** was welcomed by those who were in no doubt that unemployment pushed people to the margins of existence. The effect was to 'sanitise' the problem and make it more acceptable. With regard to offences against property such as burglary, thefts from motor-vehicles and shoplifting, the pattern was also reflective of repeat/recidivist behaviour. Again, attention is drawn to the cycle of offending as perpetrators could

sometimes see no other alternative but to have recourse to survivalist crime. However, as we have also seen, there were sometimes very few gender disparities in the commission of certain types of offences.

Rising crime in the early Nineties had one profound effect: it pushed the perception of crime-fear to even greater heights. With ordinary members of the public and the authorities aware of the problem, the fear of crime was exacerbated by certain types of offending. In the main, growing levels of violence, vandalism and car-crime did little to quell these concerns, whilst the menace of drugs emerged as a potent threat to community life in areas where youths were seen to have nothing else to look forward to in their lives. In this respect, the experience of unemployment was profound and completely destructive to a generation who 'simply had nothing better to do' than turn on themselves and on their communities.

Inevitably, the debate on crime and unemployment invited the issue of punishment and deterrence. As we have seen, not everyone embraced the view that criminals should be given a 'soft' option after committing their misdeeds. Only harsh prison sentencing, some argued, would produce the desired effect. On the other hand, there were those who were clearly indifferent to such measures. For these, punishment designed to understand the cycle of offending had yielded quite positive results. Through a variety initiatives, youths were given the opportunity of confronting their behaviour in such a way as to understand the reason for it in the first place. In some counties, this had already impacted positively on the crime pattern. Moreover, these reformative measures inferred that locking young offenders into institutions was merely punishing them twice: firstly for being deprived and poor - a punishment inflicted by society - and secondly, for reacting to their circumstances in the only way that they knew or understood. Further still, it was far more progressive to attempt to reform the criminal than to risk turning him back onto the streets, better prepared and better informed as a consequence of a spell in prison or 'the University of Crime'.

The concerns, themes and issues highlighted above and in preceding chapters, give rise to a number of conclusions. What follows is essentially a summary of findings and observations. It is to this which we now turn.

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Chapter Six

Conclusion

A Brief Review

In many ways the experience for those who lived through the hardship of depression in the inter-war years, was not that different to those who endured the hardships of recession in the Eighties and Nineties. Statistically, such an assertion is not that surprising. According to A.H.Halsey, for instance, the return of mass unemployment under the Conservative premiership of Thatcher and Major gave rise to a 'startling' statistical discovery: mass unemployment had not only returned but was probably at an even higher level than in the inter-war years. Referring to the recession of the mid-Eighties, he insisted:

By 1984-5, unemployment was not only at levels unprecedented in the post-war era but was also probably somewhat higher on a comparable basis in the depths of the depression 1931-2.[1]

In the 1990's, similar sentiments abounded when academics such as Beatrix Campbell and Labour politicians such as John Prescott commented that once again, 'record levels of unemployment had returned' on a scale 'not witnessed since the early 1930's'. [2] Others, such as Professor Emeritus of Politics, Bernard Crick, raised the point that the reincarnation of mass unemployment was not so much a surprise, but was, in some ways, 'comforting'. As he put it:

The suggestion of the 1930's, for all the horrible memories it evokes, does offer at the same time a vaguely comforting view: however unpleasant it is, it is at least familiar. We have been through it all before. It shows there is nothing new under the sun. [3]

Reflectively, however, what remains is a strong sense of nostalgia for the inter-war years: a feeling that in spite of

'unremitting depression' and hardship, the people of South Wales maintained a stoic resistance. To a degree and as we have seen, this was largely the case, but not entirely so. There was, undoubtedly, an undermining of that traditional sense of community unique to Wales. Notwithstanding the point, historian Deian Hopkin has emphasised that in spite of 'The enduring image of Wales in the inter-war years [as] one of unremitting depression, unemployment, decline and misery, a hollow eyed nation in permanent procession to the Soup Kitchen', much of this nostalgia has been 'carefully nurtured' - especially by politicians. Consequently, it becomes difficult to search for answers. For Hopkin, this raises the important question: 'where, then, does the truth lie?', he asks[4]

In South Wales, where memories were sufficiently clear to recall the scars of industrial depression of a bygone age, the proffered response was that the problems of the past had simply returned to haunt the present. Indeed, in the midst of the recession of the 1990's, one correspondent - who witnessed first hand the Depression of the 1930's - suggested that 'nothing had been learnt and nothing had been changed': mass unemployment had returned a host of social problems; it was simply a case of '..taking us back to the 1930's'. [5] In complete agreement was one ex-miner from mid-Glamorgan who commented that history was merely repeating itself. Having been made redundant with the closure of the local colliery, he reflected:

I couldn't believe it, but there I was picking coal on exactly the same tips and in exactly the same places as my grandfather did before the war. [6]

In the inter-war years, debate tended to focus on the impact of worklessness: unemployment was a 'social evil' that increasingly became associated with rising levels of crime. With prominent community leaders across the region mindful of the strain on community life, their fears and concerns resoundingly revolved around the erosion of social normalcy. Conspicuously, mass unemployment and its social consequences

was a divisive issue - especially amongst clerics who were prompted into an uneasy debate that questioned their role and degree of intervention in social life. However, these were tangible concerns in Wales and, whilst the majority of offences were of a minor nature, others were much more serious. At the same time, there was a distinct and growing contempt for the law, as well as a greater fear of crime or of becoming a victim of crime. Moreover, in the period 1925-35, there was a discernible change of attitude as the lack of work was seen to contribute to a change in the pattern of criminal behaviour. In the main, this was reflected in the rise in offences against property, from coal-stealing and petty theft through to burglary and the taking of vehicles. Also, while certain offences such as the theft of coal from railway sidings and collieries were, to some extent, condoned by the community, others were clearly not and bore testimony to communities turning in on each other in an attempt to survive.

In the 'front line' the police were in an omniscient but difficult position. In a sense, there was a degree of alienation, arguably never more obvious than in their protection of 'blacklegs' and the coal companies in the many riots and disputes that swept across the region. However, being aware of the rise in the statistics of crime, some police chiefs were not slow to evince concerns about how best to tackle the problem of spiralling delinquency. There was, it seems, considerable optimism in Swansea over the Boys Club movement as a method of curbing wayward juveniles born into an environment of idleness. For the time, the views of senior police figures were fairly outspoken, but the effect was justified and, more importantly, taken on board by politicians who debated the issue in the House of Commons. Behind the police, however, were the Courts inviting the issue of punishment and deterrence: in South Wales punishment reflected the seriousness of the offence, but not consistently so. While magistrates appeared to understand the hardships underpinning some criminal acts, certain

individuals were made an example of in an effort to deter the potentially wayward and stem the tide of law-breaking.

Some sixty years after the Great Depression, mass unemployment re-emerged and with it a familiar debate. Noticeably, it was now a debate intensely political in character, with the Left and Right of the political spectrum manipulating the debate to suit their own ends. For those on the Right, criminals were simply 'wicked' and chose to commit their misdeeds. There was an argument, then, for greater social control and stronger police powers. On the Left, it was the party of Government - the Conservatives - who were to blame for the relentless and unprecedented rise in deviancy and lawlessness. Government, they argued, had mismanaged the economy and laid bare a society vulnerable to an assault on its material foundation: crime and lawlessness was inevitable but nonetheless avoidable. Arguably, the New Labour assault on the traditional Tory stance as the party of law and order was an important element in Labour's election victory in 1997.

Today, the debate on crime and unemployment is characterised by its complexity. Crime, and the causes of crime, being generally understood in less simplistic terms compared to the inter-war years; although in South Wales it was always much more straightforward as we have seen. In a sense, this change was quite evident by the Nineties in that crime became an issue to be understood within wider parameters: crime and unemployment comprising a mass landscape where pockets of intense social deprivation were synonymous with crime of epidemic proportions. In this sense, it was the estates that appeared to harbour problems seemingly independent of general improvements in the economy or in the recorded, official statistics. By the Nineties, crime was less understood within the 'context of the times' and rather more within the context of 'locality'. To paraphrase Hopkin's question of where the truth lies, it could be argued that crime and unemployment in the Nineties had become problematic for severely impoverished albeit physically isolated micro-communities.

Comparisons and Observations

In both periods, clear and distinct comparisons remain. In a literary and statistical sense, both periods witnessed an increase in cases of shoplifting, begging, burglary, car-theft and suicide. Even the offence of coal-stealing had returned to some extent by the Eighties and Nineties. There was also the clear concern over youth or juvenile crime and a burgeoning 'unemployment culture'. In the Thirties there was concern about the 'unemployables' who, by the Nineties, were labelled the 'underclass'. Furthermore, the tone of the debate seemed familiar with dialogue revolving around the threat to law and order and who was/is to blame or who was/is responsible. In both periods, too, the emphasis placed on reformatory measures as a means of changing criminal behaviour yielded positive results, especially in relation to juvenile crime. Nevertheless, there was clearly a comparative link between social deprivation and criminality, with the general balance of opinion focusing on the importance of poor social environment as an inducement to criminal activity.

In the inter-war years, the impact of worklessness led some of those who were particularly impoverished to seek dishonest means to maintain some form of existence. Essentially, the effect of this was a marked increase in the level of property crime, especially offences such as housebreaking, coal-stealing, shoplifting, begging and petty theft. In the Nineties, on the other hand, the same offences occur albeit to a greater extent and often reaching record proportions. The classic example here related to offences involving vehicles; for example, joyriding, the theft of cars or articles from within them such as radios/stereos. In the Nineties, this form of offending simply spiralled uncontrollably amongst a generation that was not simply wayward or seeking a thrill, but was showing the more worrying signs of expressing anger at being excluded from the spoils of meaningful employment and opportunity. In that sense, their actions were manifestly a powerful statement -

especially to agencies such as the police, the courts and the probation services. Evidently, they seemed incapable of dealing with the problem with commentators of all persuasions fairly unequivocal about this. In the inter-war years, on the other hand, such a reaction was not as evident. Rather, this type of offending - which began in this period - was almost petty and mischievous in comparison. Arguably, however, what sets these two periods apart with regard to this particular type of offence is the expression of anger, often accompanied by violence and complete disrespect for the law and the judicial system. Of course, it is also a question of scale or degree: vehicle ownership in the Nineties was far higher compared to the inter-war years. Therefore, the opportunity to commit these offences would be greater also, although there is evidence to suggest that much of this offending was fairly organised.

In both periods, property crime was undoubtedly the main concern. However, what emerges from the 1920's and 1930's is the extent to which it occurred and the level of fear it engendered. Whilst it would be impossible to ascertain the full extent of crime-fear, it was certainly the case that people were far more aware of crime and of becoming a victim of crime: people locked their doors, their cars if they had one, their sheds and their premises. Burglary and housebreaking was a far more common occurrence than present nostalgia would lead us to believe. By no means were these the 'good old days' or safe, law-abiding times; and the Annual Reports of police chiefs and daily newspapers testified as such. By contrast, the recession of the early Nineties illustrated two things in relation to property crime. Firstly, it was not so much the case that people across the region were more aware of being a victim of crime, as in the inter-war years, they actually expected to be. There was a greater sense of inevitability, tirelessly perpetuated through a powerful and persuasive mass media. Secondly, there was a tangible feeling of panic - especially on the estates - rooted in the belief that the authorities and agencies had failed in their duty to protect people and

property. Unlike the inter-war years, the Nineties witnessed a more complete lack of faith in the police and the courts. Arguably this, more than anything else, was responsible for the birth of the vigilante mentality that spread across these same communities. Conversely, vigilantism seemed absent in the inter-war period.

The above concerns invited the issue of sentencing and punishment. In both periods evidence suggests that unemployed offenders were treated more sympathetically than perpetrators in employment, with both case samples highlighting the fact that those in employment were far more likely to receive a custodial sentence. In the inter-war years, offenders who were unemployed were more likely to be fined, often a relatively small amount, but not entirely so; the amount of fine did vary with the seriousness of the offence committed. The same held true for the Nineties with community orders and/or a fine being the norm. However, two interesting findings emerge from the analysis. The first is that the average age of unemployed offenders is lower than for those committing offences while in employment: 25 and 33, respectively, for the inter-war years; and 27 and 34, respectively, for the early Nineties. Given that the majority of offences were committed by those who were unemployed and in their mid-twenties, this finding might suggest that offending is more likely to be a problem concentrated amongst the long-term unemployed. In fact, observers did acknowledge this to be the case, as we have seen. Secondly, there is the issue of gender. Whilst women in both periods tended to commit similar offences - especially shoplifting - far more women had turned to crime by the Nineties. In the inter-war years, for example, the case sample highlighted that one in every eight recorded offences were being committed by females. By the early Nineties, this had spiralled to one in three. Evidently, there had been a shift in the gender balance in relation to crime and delinquency. However, for both periods women tended to receive lower fines compared to males, often had their cases deferred for social inquiry reports, or were

discharged for the offence. Again, this did vary with the seriousness of the offence committed. With that in mind for both genders, there is some evidence to suggest that cases of fraud and deception were punished more severely, although this is less clear for the inter-war period where cases of fraud seemed less prevalent. However, it should be remembered that fraud is a crime that has traditionally been well hidden, in the sense that it is less obvious than an offence against property.

In both periods there existed considerable concern that unemployment divided communities. In Swansea, for instance, fears were expressed of a city divided between rich and poor. Even as late as September, 1999, the same concerns were being aired when the **South Wales Evening Post** commented that 'Townhill heads the list of Swansea jobs blackspots with more than double the city average without work'. Synonymous with a host of social problems, the report further stressed that in Swansea there was 'a huge divide which still exists between the rich and poor across the city'.^[7] However, for the poorest in both periods, social deprivation as a consequence of unemployment had the effect of putting strain on communities and their structures. As mentioned earlier, this manifested itself by threatening social normality, or at least the sense of social normality. In the Twenties and Thirties, the sense of community was strong and much more clearly defined. Nonetheless, mass unemployment led many to contemplate breaking the law. There was, it seems, a change in attitude as, for some, breaking the law was not something that rested easily on the conscience. This presented various agencies with an enormous challenge. However, there was still a degree of optimism amongst, for instance, police chiefs who remained convinced that the return of employment and more prosperous times would counter the trend towards crime and delinquency. Indeed, the statistics did later provide the evidence to prove that this happened with the advent of an improving economic situation in the mid to late Thirties. Regardless of that, it was arguably the strong sense of community, as opposed to the measures adopted by the

police and the courts that did most in preventing a deteriorating situation becoming worse. By contrast, the evidence from the recession of the late Eighties and early Nineties suggests a more complete breakdown or disintegration of social structures. Many of the estates, for instance, were no-go areas where outsiders were shunned and crime was rife. As we have seen, at Penrhys, Gurnos and Townhill, there developed a siege mentality fuelled by an intense fear of crime and of becoming a victim of crime. This, more than anything else, had an impact on the debate and on how crime was perceived. In many instances this perception - based on fear - was rooted in intimidation, underpinned by vandalism. Again, this was an expression of anger - a signature - by an underclass completely excluded from society. By contrast, there was no tangible evidence to suggest that this occurred in the inter-war years, in spite of a discernible degree of crime-fear that developed at that time. The underclass of the Nineties, then, seemed far more threatening and out of control compared to the inter-war years; thus further providing for an important distinction between the two periods.

By way of explanation it is suggested that, apart from the sense of community, there was a strong belief that full employment would return the wayward - especially youths - back into law-abiding citizens. To an extent, this also helps to explain why crime was seen in more simplistic terms and as something that could be overcome. Moreover, this belief was, by contrast, almost faith-like. Nonetheless, social factors underpinning criminality were still regarded by many commentators in both periods to be crucial in understanding the aetiology of criminal behaviour.

The above brings into question the role/ impact of the Welfare State and a brief comment is invited here. In the first instance, it has to be said that whether or not the creation of the Welfare State had any bearing on the nature of the debate is arguably contentious in itself. However, two observations can be made. Firstly, the erosion of the Welfare State under Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives

was sufficient evidence for those, particularly on the Left, who argued that the consistent removal of benefits would naturally bring about higher levels of lawlessness. The inference being that benefits provided under the welfare system act as a safety net: the more adequate the level of benefits, the lower the likelihood to commit crimes of survival. Secondly, and on the other hand, it has been argued by some commentators that the Welfare State has actually been *responsible* for a great deal of dishonesty and law-breaking, therefore undermining the purpose for which it was originally intended. The crude perception, as the sociologist Charles Murray discovered, was that the welter of benefits that existed in the early Nineties under the Welfare State were, quite simply, rich pickings for a band of 'idle, thieving bastards'. These were people who had shunned the work ethic, opportunities for training and enterprise, and simply turned to the exploitation of the welfare system and crime. He insisted that a great deal of unemployment was voluntary simply because it was far easier to exploit the system than to embrace the work ethic. In so doing, certain individuals had been responsible for creating their own 'lost generation'. As he put it:

I want to reintroduce the notion of blame, and sharply reduce our readiness to call people 'victims'. [8]

In essence, Murray claims that many of the unemployed choose not to take up employment. He argues, in line with New Right thinking, that state benefits also act as a 'disincentive' to work and should be kept at a low level. He also argues that the existence of welfare benefits leads directly to lone parenthood, homelessness and a host of social problems as a consequence. [9]

The social problems referred to by Murray were elaborated upon further by an American study in 1995. According to Michael Tanner, Director of Health and Welfare Studies at the Cato Institute, welfare benefits have contributed to crime in the Nineties in several ways. Primarily, he argues that benefits foster lone-parenthood,

the children of which were found to be twice as likely to become involved in crime as they search out male role models who are more often than not involved in criminal activity - especially drugs. He found that 70 per cent of juveniles in state reform institutions derived from fatherless homes, and 43 per cent comprised the prison inmate population.[10] To some extent this may help to explain, or explain further, how problems on certain estates such as Penrhys and Gurnos are spawned. Again, this does highlight the complexities involved in the search for answers. However, in a similar way it does not explain the rise in the crime figures in the inter-war years, where the Welfare State was absent and there existed the humiliation of the Poor Law and the savageness of the Means Test. As the evidence suggested, the absence of work meant a complete loss of income that seemed to actually contribute to the rise in criminality.

There are some distinct dissimilarities between the two periods. For example, in the inter-war years there was clearly a downward trend in the figures of recorded violent crime. In essence, South Wales was a safer and more peaceable place to live than fifty or a hundred years previously. In the late Eighties and Nineties, figures and comments suggest that this trend had reversed commensurate with a heightened fear of crime and a 'need to feel safe' mentality. In addition, there existed the menace of drugs that plagued traditional communities and threatened to undermine their structures. In this period the problem of drugs could not be underestimated. It was a massive problem inextricably linked with a particular category of offending, namely offences against property. In the inter-war years, property offending seemed not to have been fuelled by the need to acquire money or goods to feed a drug or, indeed, alcohol problem. However, there are two observations that can be drawn from this. The first is that offending in the inter-war years was much more clearly linked to the need to survive, often reflected in the petty and minor nature of criminal activity. There was, in essence, a much simpler motive to commit offences against the law. The second

observation relates to the issue of drugs and the complex pattern of behaviour that the problem engenders. As mentioned earlier, crime in the modern period was understood as something less straightforward when compared to previous years. The issue of drugs was a classic example of how the pattern of crime had become much more confused. While drug-related offending could, on the one hand, be understood, it was the aetiology of this pattern that appeared to have caused most concern. In other words, the reason why certain individuals were becoming involved with drugs in the first instance. The evidence suggests that social deprivation in the form of social exclusion, unemployment and poverty were interwoven with the drug culture in Wales. For that reason the comments of investigators pointed to the need to tackle the problem of drugs by focusing on the social environment in which the drug culture was born. The answer, then, lies not just within communities, which do have a role to play, but within social agencies responsible for tackling social deprivation and providing meaningful employment and opportunity. Consistently, the lack of opportunity and the loss of permanent, well-paid jobs - especially in the Valleys - was seen as the most important factor underpinning drug related offending across the region.

In both periods neither politics nor religion managed to resolve the issues debated. Politically, crime and unemployment were debated - often intensely - but this seems to have achieved very little, other than raising the profile of the debate. In the Thirties, the upturn in economic fortunes towards the end of the decade, closely followed by the onset of war and the rapid mobilisation of labour and industry, meant that the simplistic view of crime and unemployment had, at least for some, been resolved. However, this raises the point of whether it was politics or a generally improving economic situation that brought about the decline in the figures of crime. In other words, one is tempted to ask whether improved fortunes would have produced the same effect had crime and unemployment never been debated at all. There seems to be little definitive evidence that

points to a specific, or successful, policy for dealing with the mass of unemployed. In fact, one is all too easily reminded of the Poor Law or the Means Test, and the notion that the unemployed were being punished for the circumstances in which they found themselves. In the late Eighties and Nineties, on the other hand, crime and unemployment was again debated, but, more importantly, it was manipulated by leading political parties. This manipulation raises many questions, least of all the proximity of certain political figures to the poverty of the unemployed. One is tempted to ask whether particular individuals knew anything about what it was like to be poor, destitute, angry and desperate. Did, for instance, Prime Ministers such as Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Tony Blair ever have to beg in subways, sleep on park benches or turn to drugs to anaesthetise a miserable existence? Arguably, no. Whatever, the question of whether crime and unemployment was resolved politically remains. The suggestion here is that it was not: the issue was displaced. Furthermore, it is worth reflecting whether certain legal measures, or the emphasis on punishment under the Tories, had any real impact on turning people away from crime and deviancy. Again, the evidence suggests not. Also, it is perhaps premature to suggest that the effect of Government initiatives under New Labour, such as the New Deal, have had any impact on levels of criminality. Arguably, they have but definitive data at this present time of writing has yet to be produced. What is known is that massive investment into severely impoverished areas has produced dividends. For example, a report on the Townhill estate in Swansea in January, 2001, claimed that:

The Hill is alive again. Unemployment and crime have been slashed on Swansea's oldest housing estate...the number of people out of work has fallen by more than half and poverty is being beaten. Crime is also being kept in check.

According to Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Partnerships, Tyssul Lewis, European aid totalling £9 million has meant that 'the unemployment rate [Townhill] has halved.

There is much more of a feel-good factor here. The agencies set up in Townhill for unemployment have made a world of difference.'[11] The inference, then, is that secure, European investment channelled through the Welsh Assembly and targeted towards areas of deprivation may well be the key to many of the problems that Wales has endured in the past.

With regard to religious intervention into social life, it is suggested that very few of the issues were resolved. In either period religion did not seem to offer a constructive solution to the problems faced in various communities across South Wales. There were exceptions, but, overall, the emphasis tended to rest on the issue of responsibility. While some churches did open their doors to the unemployed in the Twenties and Thirties, the measures put in place generally, and surprisingly, seemed to lack any cohesive quality: there was no defineable policy on dealing with the mass of unemployed. Of course, one is mindful of just how far religion should penetrate the social sphere. There are undoubtedly limits beyond which it becomes someone else's responsibility, as certain commentators pointed out. In the Nineties, of course, the issue was much more diluted as churches and chapels struggled to save their congregations, their identities and even their buildings.

What have we learnt ?

Given that in both periods crime and unemployment were debated along the lines outlined above, there is one overriding question left unanswered: what have we learnt from the 1920's/30's? In a sense, it could be argued that given the tendency for the same questions to recur means that not a great deal has been absorbed over the last sixty years or so. This is, however, explicable to a degree because of the way in which society has changed. In the inter-war years, the question was mainly one of Employment, Relief and Amelioration, with society operating within clearly defined boundaries and social hierarchy. 'Agencies', ranging from

the government, the unions, local authorities and clerics functioned within this society, played fairly distinct roles and had specific responsibilities. In that sense, society was much more clearly understood and far more mindful of the sense of community. However, unemployment was certainly the greatest threat, especially to skilled and skilful workers who were not slow in showing their discontent through political struggle. While it would be true to say that there were jobs elsewhere, and many did leave, there remained strong, well developed ties for the majority, especially in the form of family, the churches, the dramatic societies, sport, choirs and unions and so on. It was also a highly politicised, low-cost economy. In the Nineties the situation was much more confusing. Some have argued that there was 'no such thing as society'. Arguably, there was little sense of hierarchy and the problems were much more involved in a society that was generally less politicised. And so it continues. Today, these agencies are still forced to grapple with their own sense of identity in the first instance - they have very limited powers - and then, by default, come to terms with deep-seated problems gnawing away and undermining disparate communities. The extent of continual religious decline is a classic example of this social erosion. Where once proud churches and chapels are fortunate enough to remain as stoic monuments of a bygone age, others have found a new lease of life as executive housing or, as in the case of St.Pauls in Swansea, a homeless refuge, followed by sex cinema and now Indian Restaurant.

What remains is a clear and acute sense of desperation. As in the Nineties we still have a discernible underclass coming to terms with a society that is seen as exclusive; a phenomenon reinforced by mass consumerism and conspicuous consumption largely perpetuated through the media and popular culture. One might argue, then, that certain crimes are similarly 'condoned' precisely because of the conspicuous affluence of the rich and general disrespect for the police - increasingly and derogatively regarded as 'pigs'. On top of that, there is the abandonment of full employment policy and

a realisation that capitalism does not provide employment for all. Again, as was the case in the Eighties and Nineties, there exists the wider and more absolute phenomenon of de-industrialisation, arguably rendering the experience of unemployment a much more personal tragedy. The sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, points out that this sense of desperation is founded on the persistent removal of a 'safety net': from the undermining of the Welfare State through to the realisation that 'economic upturns no longer signal the end to unemployment'. 'Rationalisation', 'flexible employees' and 'slimming down the workforce' now reduce to the same thing: 'unemployment, closures and cutting jobs'. Society, asserts Bauman, is in a state of turmoil. The security of working life is no longer welded to traditional, heavy industries. In other words, he argues:

Jobs for *life* are no more. As a matter of fact jobs *as such*, as we once understood them, are no more. Without them, there is little room for life-lived-as-a-project, for long-term planning and far-reaching hopes.[12]

Perhaps, then, it is not so surprising, as Labour MP, Paul Flynn, pointed out, that the youth in Wales now face 'a very serious problem'. The situation across South Wales, he insists, now paints:

...a very depressing picture when young people see the greatest rewards apparently reserved for drug dealers. If they want to remain honest, the only option sometimes available is to get a job with McDonalds.[13]

While it would be true to say, as in the Thirties, that there are jobs, the skill requirements are acutely obvious and clearly a barrier to those who are economically inactive and socially marginalised. No longer is it a case of 'getting on one's bike to get a job' but, rather, 'getting on one's bike to re-train', often for jobs that are transparent, fixed-term, zero-hour and poorly paid. Again, this infers a degree of mobility. No longer, too, is it a case of the skilled,

time-served, adequately-paid miner walking to the nearest colliery. Instead, it is the redundant miner's wife catching the bus to the nearest enterprise zone to be rewarded with the indignity of the minimum wage - if she's lucky. Above all this makes the experience of unemployment a far greater personal challenge.

Against a backcloth of agencies who have very little power to change the situation around - especially politicians who increasingly generalise and tow the Party line - the question remains: whose responsibility is it? While the emphasis in Wales following New Labour's landslide election victory in 1997 has been on devolved government, with the highlight on citizenship, widening participation and social inclusion, it is still too early to apportion credit. The National Assembly for Wales is still, arguably, searching for an identity. In the interim and as we have seen, the police are at the forefront, the first line of resistance in a deteriorating social landscape. But as we have also seen, they were somewhat resentful of increasingly being seen as nothing more than 'uniformed social workers'. This, of course, raises other more searching questions about the precise role of the police. In essence, are the police capable of being social workers? Perhaps more poignantly, is the probation service failing in its duties? In comparison with the Twenties and Thirties, one might also note a certain lack of interest in the police, social workers or relief organisations as agencies. Nevertheless, whatever the answer may be, for better or worse, they are embroiled in a 'social matrix': a matrix where, in reality, we are all responsible because we are all basically Thatcherites. We accept market forces and we endure its baggage. For that reason alone, the debate on unemployment and its social repercussions appears destined to be locked in a cycle.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Halsey, **op.cit.**,p.173.
- 2 Campbell, **op.cit.**,p.303; see also comments of John Prescott, MP, in **Western Mail**, 5 October, 1996.
- 3 Crick, **op.cit.**,p.11.
- 4 Deian Hopkin, 'Social Reactions to Economic Change', in Herbert and Jones, **op.cit.**, p.52. See also Stead in Minchinton (Ed), **op.cit.**, p.104.
- 5 **South Wales Evening Post**, 24 November,1994.
- 6 Nicola Heyward-Thomas and Ellys Owen, **op.cit.**
- 7 **South Wales Evening Post**, 29 September, 1999.
- 8 C. Murray, **The Emerging British Underclass**, London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1990, p.71
- 9 Macdonald (Ed), **op.cit.**, p.98
- 10 Michael Tanner; paper to Senate Judiciary Committee, 7 June, 1995. See: Congressional Testimony.
- 11 **Herald of Wales**, January 11, 2001.
- 12 Bauman, **op.cit.**,p.36.
- 13 **Wales On Sunday**, 20 August,1995.

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